■ **Entertainment / A22**

Zsa Zsa Padilla marriage annulled

■ **Business / B1**

Treasury bill rates rise across the board

■ **News / A2**

Nokors selling guns to MILF, says paper

■ **Metro / A15**

Pa charged with slay of 2 sons

■ **Across / A13**

Frat brods raised funds for Sulu doc's release

Jinggoy laughs off tale of Erap-Mark meeting

By Armand N. Nocum

DID OUSTED President Joseph Estrada meet with his former adviser, convicted erstwhile Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez, in Hong Kong on Dec. 27?

Some quarters said they saw the two men meeting in a Hong Kong mall a few days be-

JINGGOY/A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

FPJ followers launch signature drive for Susan

By Fe Zamora

FOLLOWERS of the late movie idol Fernando Poe Jr. are set to launch a signature campaign to convince his widow, movie queen Susan Roces, to lead the opposition, according to movie actor Rez Cortez.

Cortez, who heads the National Coordinat-

FPJ/A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Tuesday, January 4, 2005 ★★★ 36 pages / 3 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 28 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Jalosjos pardon opposed

GMA, bishops declare days of mourning

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

FILIPINOS may not have the cash to donate to Asia's tsunami victims but they are making up for it with prayers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a day of national mourning and prayer on Friday. In a separate move, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines urged all Filipinos to observe a period of mourning on Sunday.

Ms Arroyo issued the declaration as she prepared to leave tomorrow night for Jakarta, Indonesia, to attend a special meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that will discuss the setting up of programs to mitigate the impact of future disasters in the region.

"Friday's a good day to have a prayer because the Muslims pray specially on Fridays, and also it's First Friday, so we will have that day of prayer and mourning. We will ask everybody to pray," Ms Arroyo said.

The tsunamis, which ravaged coastlines in Asia and Africa, killed possibly up to 150,000 people, including at least five Filipinos in Thailand.

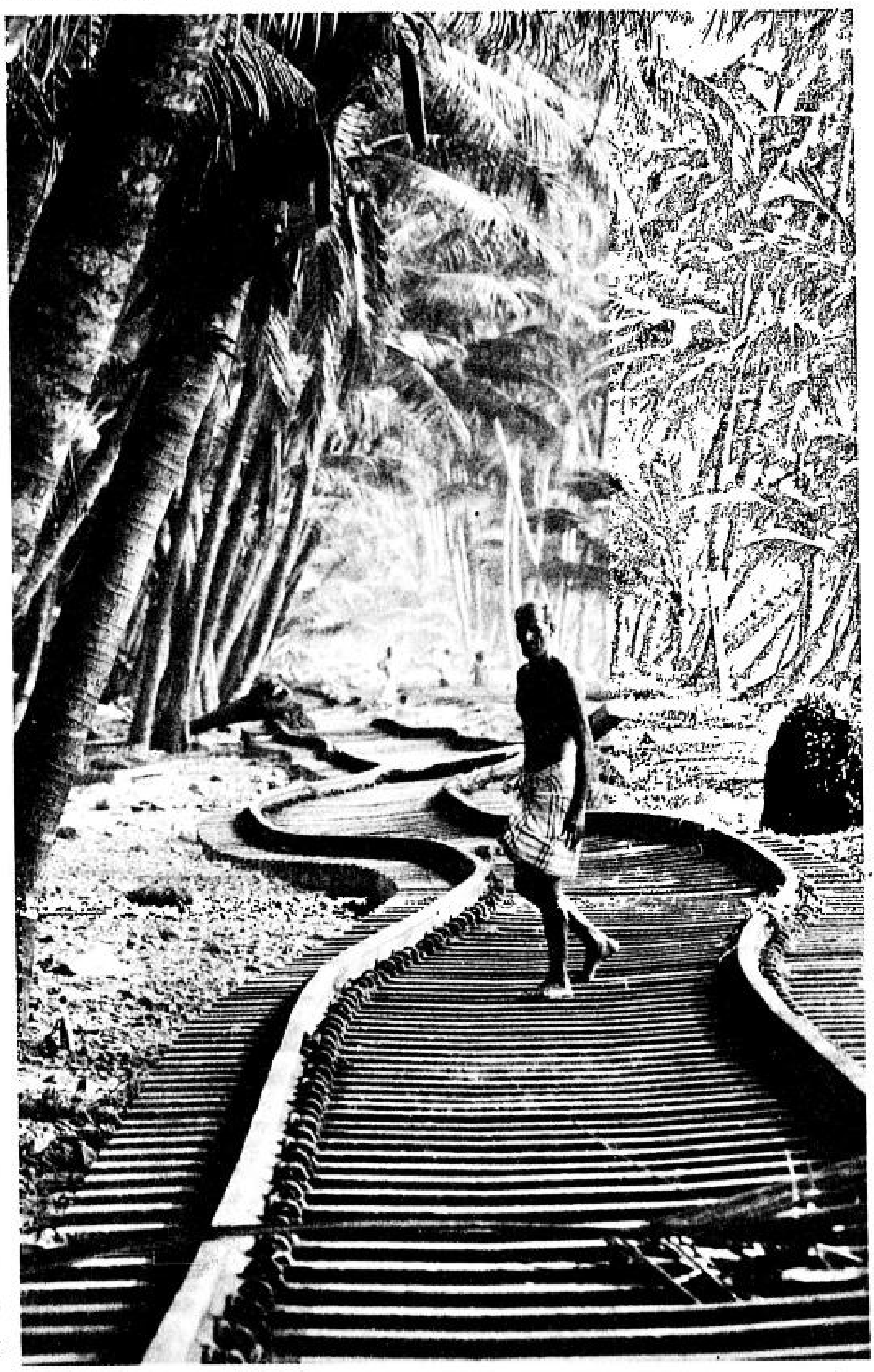
One of the Filipino fatalities' remains was mistakenly claimed by a Thai family, according to The Associated Press.

Philippine officials did not know how the mistake happened, but said the confusion surrounding Kathryn Joy Lomadilla's remains may have been caused by the unprecedented magnitude of the disaster, or simply because Filipinos and Thais look alike.

Lomadilla, 23, worked as a choreographer and ballet dance instructor at a hotel in Phuket that was devastated by the tsunamis.

"There were just too many casualties or maybe because Thais and Filipinos look the same. We don't know, but in a disaster of this magnitude, confusion is bound to happen," said Hector Cruz, a Manila-based

GMA/A14



BEATEN TRACK: A man walks across the railway tracks, twisted by tidal waves that struck the village of Kalamulla, 40 km from the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo. Officials estimate that 30,000 people were killed in the tsunami strike.

AFP

Drop plan, anticrime groups advise GMA

By Christian V. Esguerra and Philip C. Tubeza

DON'T even think about it, Madam President.

Anticrime and civil society groups yesterday decried President Macapagal-Arroyo's reported plan to grant a "conditional pardon" to convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos, a former congressman, even for humanitarian reasons.

"The President must be advised to be pro-victim, especially because the victim here is a girl and her life can't be restored to normal anymore," said Dante Jimenez, founding chair of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption.

Pastor "Boy" Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs, warned of dire consequences for the President if she were to make what he said was a very unpopular decision.

"Even in the spirit of reconciliation, she has to remember that it's not a political act that she can just pardon. It's a criminal act," said Saycon.

The Equal Justice for All Movement was similarly appalled by the prospect of Jalosjos' sentence of two life terms being suspended by a presidential pardon.

"It will prove that in the Philippines, big-time politicians get big-time privileges for their big-time crimes," said E-Just chair lawyer Leonard de Vera.

Children's rights advocate Katrina Legarda voiced her objection to Jalosjos' reported bid for a presidential pardon, saying granting such a request to a VIP prisoner like him could only erode the people's confidence in the justice system.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had raised the possibility of the President extending a "conditional pardon with parole conditions" to Jalosjos because of a lingering heart ailment.

Gonzalez yesterday clarified that the administration had yet to reach a decision on Jalosjos' appeal for executive clemency.

"I'd like to state very clearly that there has been no decision on this case. Not from here. Not from the President," he said.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 of raping an 11-year-old girl. The Supreme Court upheld the conviction in November 2001, prompting the House of Representatives to finally drop him from its rolls.

Jalosjos has been allowed twice to be taken out of his cell at the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa and confined at the

JALOSJOS/A4

Tsunami relief operation confronts chaos

THE MOST massive relief operation since World War II faced absolute chaos yesterday as US Secretary of State Colin Powell and other world leaders headed for top-level talks in Indonesia to speed up aid to millions of tsunami victims.

Key European Union leaders will attend the emergency disaster summit in Jakarta this week, officials said, voicing confidence Europe will further boost aid to the tsunami-hit region.

Aid logjams began to ease at Asian airports bursting with hundreds of tons of emergency supplies, but it was the destruction left by nature that was proving the biggest obstacle to the $2-billion operation, relief groups said yesterday.

Relief agencies also faced the threat of pirates plundering aid carried by ships.

"It's absolute chaos," said Titon Mitra of CARE International, which is running 14 sur-

TSUNAMI/A14

A boy named Tsunami

ANG LAKAS NG DATING NG PANGALAN!!!

PORT BLAIR, India—Six-day-old Tsunami Roy doesn't know what all the fuss is about, as he hungrily suckles his mother's breast.

Sitting in a classroom in one of India's tsunami-ravaged islands, his father Lakshmi Narain Roy, 34, recounted the events leading to Tsunami's birth, three weeks ahead of time.

"It was early on Sunday when I woke up my wife. She was about to take a sip of tea when we felt the first jolt. She screamed for me to pick up our sleeping son and rush out."

Roy grabbed their 6-year-old son and ran out of their home before turning back to see if his wife Namita was following.

"She had fallen down and lost consciousness."

After hoisting his wife and son onto his rickshaw, Roy pedaled as fast as he could toward a nearby slope.

"Soon she was complaining of pain in

A BOY/A14

BUDDHISTS, Catholics and Hare Krishna followers join Indonesians, Sri Lankans and Filipinos in an interfaith prayer for tsunami victims on Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Avenue in Makati City.

ERIK ARAZAS

TALES OF THE CITI

Investor fights world's largest banking group

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

(First of four parts)

SPECIAL REPORT
Project Editor:
Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

BOWING deeply at a press conference in Tokyo on Oct. 25, 2004, the chief executive of the United States-based Citigroup, Charles O. Prince III, apologized for the company's failure to comply with regulatory requirements in Japan.

Japanese regulators had earlier ordered the shutdown of Citigroup's private banking business—consisting of a Citibank branch in Tokyo and satellite offices in Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka—for severe violations of Japanese banking laws.

The violations included misleading customers about investment risks, overcharging for some financial products, failing to prevent possible money laundering, and making loans to clients engaged in tax evasion and stock manipulation.

These added to the string of ethical and regulatory lapses at Citigroup, the world's largest financial institution, prompting Prince to order the drawing up of compliance standards for the whole firm and for every Citigroup employee to undergo ethics training. *(See sidebar, Page A5.)*

Months before Prince's apology in Tokyo, a number of clients in the Philippines had accused some banks of similar irregularities, prompting the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to order the tightening up of controls on the trust operations of banks and quasi-banks in the country.

One of the Philippine-based clients was businesswoman Concepcion Poblador, who sought administrative sanctions against Citibank from banking regulators in the United States and the Philippines.

Poblador, a client of Citibank

INVESTOR/A5

AT A GLANCE

- CITIGROUP is the world's largest financial services company, the largest credit card issuer, one of the main providers of online services, and the first United States-based bank with $1 trillion in assets.
- It offers banking (mainly through Citibank), asset management, insurance and investment banking in more than 5,600 locations—2,600 in the United States alone—in some 100 countries all over the world. It employs 255,000 people worldwide.
- Today, it is the largest foreign commercial bank in the Philippines in terms of assets and revenues, number of employees and domestic branches. *PDI Research*

Sources: Citigroup and Polaris Institute websites

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COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/04/05 SOURCE: PAGASA

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Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

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North Korea is at the center of a diplomatic impasse over its nuclear arms ambitions. Six-way talks aimed at resolving the nuclear crisis have stalled after they were last held in June. *Reuters*

BUILDING HOMES

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Economic problems still with us—GMA

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

AFTER crowing about robust growth economic growth and a surge in investments last year, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday admitted that the country continues to face serious economic problems, particularly in government financing.

"We are not denying that we have a problem with our economy and our biggest problem is our borrowings. We must find a way where we can fund our economic growth with our own revenues rather borrowings," said President Arroyo in a press conference.

This admission is a continuation of her flip-flopping on the true financial state of the government. In August last year, the President declared that her government was in serious fiscal crisis because of the government's rising dependence on debt to finance its spending.

But less than two month after, the President made a 180-degree turnaround and declared that the government was out of a fiscal crisis even though no new tax bill was approved by Congress at that point (only the sin tax bill was enacted out of the eight revenue measures in the President's tax agenda as of the end of 2004).

Fiscal reforms will remain as this administration's top priority this year with the approval of the 2005 budget by February and the legislation of all her tax proposals that would raise P80 billion in new revenues as its main goals.

"I don't think we'll have a quorum problem," said the President on her decision to call a special session from January 5 to 7 to get an early head start on her legislative agenda. "The way I see it, we are going to work on the tax measures in January and pass the budget probably in February to be able to finance the 10-point pro poor agenda of our administration," the President said. *(See related story)*

The President said she would reveal how she planned to tackle the country's economic problems including the rising cost of power, fuel, water and toll road use during the Vin d'Honneur on Jan. 7.

Palace hints at revamp in Cabinet

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PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday sounded off a possible shake-up in her Cabinet, specifically among her economic managers, although she has yet to make up her mind on who to let go and who to appoint.

"The end of the year is always a time for assessing performance targets, fitting the best people with the right positions. I have a continuing authority, prerogative to do Cabinet changes as I see fit," said President Arroyo in a press briefing at the Malacañang ceremonial hall.

The President refused to be dragged into the swirl of speculation of who's in and who's out of her Cabinet. "But I have nothing to announce right now. If there's anything to be announced sometime sooner or later, you can always be sure it's to improve governance," the President said.

Among the Cabinet members that are the focus of revamp rumors are Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, Energy Secretary Vince Pérez, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima and Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas.

The last time the President overhauled her Cabinet was shortly after being sworn into office in July for her fresh six-year term. Most of the changes she made were mostly in non-economic posts as the President kept her economic team intact.

But with her approval rating taking a nosedive because of the fiscal crisis and the growing public perception of her inability to rein in rising prices of fuel and basic commodities, the President is reportedly looking to inject fresh blood in her economic team.

But businessmen want the President to be more critical of her choices in the Cabinet.

Solons cut holidays for special session

By Carlito Pablo, Cynthia D. Balana and Michael Lim Ubac

MOST of the country's legislators have opted to cut short their holiday break to attend this week's special session of Congress called by President Macapagal-Arroyo to speed up the passage of crucial revenue measures.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., who left the country for France and Spain with his wife Georgina and youngest son Christopher last Dec. 27, will return either on the second or third day of the special session, said House deputy secretary general Emmanuel Albano.

The President has called for a special session of Congress from Jan. 5 to 7 to enable Congress to work on the passage of pending revenue measures. Congress was scheduled to resume session only on Jan. 10.

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"The House and Senate leadership must campaign hard for solons to attend the special session which is imperative for national interest," Nograles said.

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The congressmen from the ruling Lakas-CMD, Nationalist People's Coalition, Liberal Party and Nacionalista Party told Nograles they were confident of achieving a quorum.

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At the Senate, Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan also urged fellow senators and members of the House to attend the special session starting tomorrow.

Senate Pro-tempore leader Juan Flavier would likely preside in the absence of Senate President Franklin Drilon who is still in San Francisco, California.

Other Senate leaders are still out of the country including Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. and Manuel Villar.

The opposition in the Senate such as Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Senators Sergio Osmena III and Juan Ponce Enrile support the holding of the special session, but other members of the minority—Senators Luisa and Jinggoy Estrada—are unlikely to be present.

The mother and son are both in Hong Kong for former President Joseph Estrada's knee replacement surgery.

But Osmeña admitted that "not much" could be achieved during the special session because of the strong opposition to the lateral attrition bill, rationalization of fiscal incentives and the proposal to increase the value added tax rate.

Pangilinan likewise doubts the measures would be approved during the special session.

"We need more time to evaluate the full impact of each measure and three days is just not enough," the senator said.

He said that the Lateral Attrition bill might be passed next week at the earliest. The bill aims to reward state personnel for high revenue collection and penalize those who fail to meet their targets.

Pimentel said the lateral attrition bill was unlikely to get the support of most senators unless Malacañang could convince them about its revenue-raising potentials.

Japan rejects RP plea on entertainers

By Jerome Aning

JAPAN has denied the Philippines' request for reconsideration regarding the stricter requirements that would be imposed on overseas performing artists this year.

Labor Undersecretary Danilo Cruz said Japanese officials politely listened but refused to give in to Manila's appeals for either the continuing recognition of Philippine government accreditation as a requirement for OPA deployment or a five-year transition period so that the entertainment industry would have time to prepare.

"We and the industry leaders have to sit down soon so that they can comply with new requirements," he said, adding that the requirements—two years training or two years of experience outside Japan—were "nothing new" since they were imposed before Tokyo agreed to recognize Philippine government accreditation.

He said labor officials would soon discuss with the Department of Education for the formation of a uniform curriculum for courses in performing arts.

Cruz and Foreign Undersecretary Jose Brillantes went to Tokyo last week to talk with the Japanese government officials regarding the issue, which is provided in the amendments to Japan's immigration law that were meant to combat human trafficking.

The labor official said the Japanese authorities also declined Philippine requests that Tokyo should concentrate its efforts on those victimizing foreign workers instead and that there should be an assurance that no reduction in the deployment of Filipinos OPAs would happen.

"They told us the new regulations were the product of long discussions by the ministry of foreign affairs, justice and the police. They said they can't guarantee reduction of deployment and that there was quota to speak of," he added.

"I doubt that there would be a drastic reduction. We were assured that as long as our entertainers are qualified, they can go to work to Japan," Cruz said, adding that the new rules have no specified date of implementation yet.

Cruz said the Japanese officials also did not agree to Philippine appeal that the requirement of two-year experience should not be restricted to Japan only.

Japan scrapped government certification as a requirement of OPA deployment although according to Cruz, officials there believed that this was the main reason why only there were only few Filipino victims of human trafficking compared to other nationalities.

GMA: Not a peso more for Naia 3

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said that the government would not pay any peso over what the local court decides on the fair compensation to Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) and its foreign shareholder Fraport AG for building the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3).

"I said we will open the airport terminal but we will only pay for the portion of what they completed and what the court says," said President Arroyo in a press briefing.

The government filed expropriation proceedings with the Pasay Regional Trial Court on Dec. 21 and has submitted P3 billion as initial payment for whatever the court-appointed body would determine as just compensation for Naia 3.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that since Piatco and Fraport did not complete the airport terminal, any amount spent by the government to put Naia 3 in full operation would be deducted from the final compensation.

Narcs mopping up on Davao drug ring, shabu lab

By Christian V. Esguerra

GOVERNMENT agents have raided another shabu warehouse in Davao City during a followup operation and they said they have wiped out traces of a big-time drug ring's operations in the area.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force stormed the storage facility in Barangay Obrero over the weekend, officials announced yesterday.

The operation came shortly after authorities raided a shabu laboratory in Toril district and later arrested 10 Chinese and three Filipinos in a three-door apartment in Obrero.

Authorities forcibly opened the Obrero warehouse at around 9 p.m. Saturday, upon learning that volumes of shabu ingredients for the Toril laboratory were stored there, according to Chief Supt. Simeon Dizon, Region 11 director.

But it was only yesterday that PDEA and AIDSOTF operatives got inside the facility. They had no search warrant during the Saturday raid, only "visitorial powers," Dizon told reporters.

True to their suspicion, the warehouse stored numerous boxes containing ephedrine and other ingredients to manufacture shabu, the official said.

Ingredients were supposed to be processed in the Toril laboratory that was big enough to produce 150 kilos of high-grade shabu weekly, he said.

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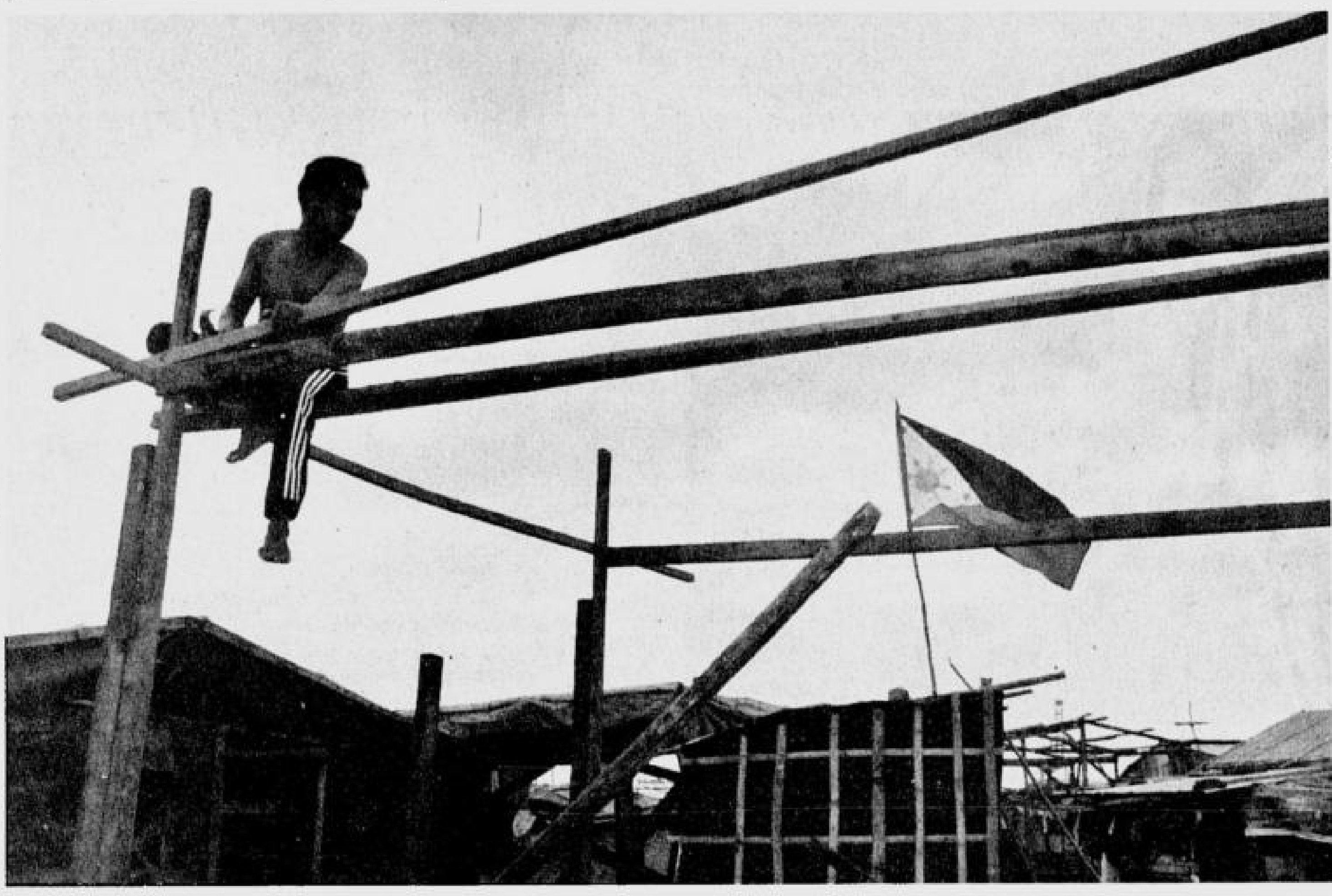

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Among the Cabinet members that are the focus of revamp rumors are Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, Energy Secretary Vince Pérez, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima and Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas.

The last time the President overhauled her Cabinet was shortly after being sworn into office in July for her fresh six-year term. Most of the changes she made were mostly in non-economic posts as the President kept her economic team intact.

But with her approval rating taking a nosedive because of the fiscal crisis and the growing public perception of her inability to rein in rising prices of fuel and basic commodities, the President is reportedly looking to inject fresh blood in her economic team.

But businessmen want the President to be more critical of her choices in the Cabinet.

Japan rejects RP plea on entertainers

By Jerome Aning

JAPAN has denied the Philippines' request for reconsideration regarding the stricter requirements that would be imposed on overseas performing artists this year.

Labor Undersecretary Danilo Cruz said Japanese officials politely listened but refused to give in to Manila's appeals for either the continuing recognition of Philippine government accreditation as a requirement for OPA deployment or a five-year transition period so that the entertainment industry would have time to prepare.

"We and the industry leaders have to sit down soon so that they can comply with new requirements," he said, adding that the requirements—two years training or two years of experience outside Japan—were "nothing new" since they were imposed before Tokyo agreed to recognize Philippine government accreditation.

He said labor officials would soon discuss with the Department of Education for the formation of a uniform curriculum for courses in performing arts.

Cruz and Foreign Undersecretary Jose Brillantes went to Tokyo last week to talk with the Japanese government officials regarding the issue, which is provided in the amendments to Japan's immigration law that were meant to combat human trafficking.

The labor official said the Japanese authorities also declined Philippine requests that Tokyo should concentrate its efforts on those victimizing foreign workers instead and that there should be an assurance that no reduction in the deployment of Filipinos OPAs would happen.

"They told us the new regulations were the product of long discussions by the ministry of foreign affairs, justice and the police. They said they can't guarantee reduction of deployment and that there was quota to speak of," he added.

"I doubt that there would be a drastic reduction. We were assured that as long as our entertainers are qualified, they can go to work to Japan," Cruz said, adding that the new rules have no specified date of implementation yet.

Cruz said the Japanese officials also did not agree to Philippine appeal that the requirement of two-year experience should not be restricted to Japan only.

Japan scrapped government certification as a requirement of OPA deployment although according to Cruz, officials there believed that this was the main reason why only there were only few Filipino victims of human trafficking compared to other nationalities.

Narcs mopping up on Davao drug ring, shabu lab

By Christian V. Esguerra

GOVERNMENT agents have raided another shabu warehouse in Davao City during a followup operation and they said they have wiped out traces of a big-time drug ring's operations in the area.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force stormed the storage facility in Barangay Obrero over the weekend, officials announced yesterday.

The operation came shortly after authorities raided a shabu laboratory in Toril district and later arrested 10 Chinese and three Filipinos in a three-door apartment in Obrero.

Authorities forcibly opened the Obrero warehouse at around 9 p.m. Saturday, upon learning that volumes of shabu ingredients for the Toril laboratory were stored there, according to Chief Supt. Simeon Dizon, Region 11 director.

But it was only yesterday that PDEA and AIDSOTF operatives got inside the facility. They had no search warrant during the Saturday raid, only "visitorial powers," Dizon told reporters.

True to their suspicion, the warehouse stored numerous boxes containing ephedrine and other ingredients to manufacture shabu, the official said.

Ingredients were supposed to be processed in the Toril laboratory that was big enough to produce 150 kilos of high-grade shabu weekly, he said.

GMA: Not a peso more for Naia 3

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said that the government would not pay any peso over what the local court decides on the fair compensation to Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) and its foreign shareholder Fraport AG for building the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3).

"I said we will open the airport terminal but we will only pay for the portion of what they completed and what the court says," said President Arroyo in a press briefing.

The government filed expropriation proceedings with the Pasay Regional Trial Court on Dec. 21 and has submitted P3 billion as initial payment for whatever the court-appointed body would determine as just compensation for Naia 3.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that since Piatco and Fraport did not complete the airport terminal, any amount spent by the government to put Naia 3 in full operation would be deducted from the final compensation.

DOH: 'Cracker injuries actually twice that in '03

By Blanche S. Rivera

AFTER initially announcing that the number of firecracker injuries in the last holiday season was largely unchanged from the previous year, the Department of Health yesterday revealed the number of injuries this year had actually nearly doubled.

The DOH's Iwas Paputok Surveillance report as of Jan. 2 showed a total of 945 cases of firecracker and stray bullet injuries recorded between 7:01 a.m. of Dec. 21, 2004, and 7 a.m. of Jan. 2, 2005.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that based on reports from government hospitals, most of the victims belonged to the C, D and E economic classes.

Some of the victims apparently did not think much of the danger of scavenging for firecrackers on the streets, Dayrit said.

"Many picked up firecrackers because they could not afford to buy them. It's like the whole culture of scavenging. As they scavenge for food, they also scavenge for their piece of the new year's celebration," Dayrit told reporters in an interview yesterday.

Of the 945 cases recorded, 899 were due to firecrackers, 41 due to stray bullets and five were caused by the ingestion of watusi and fireworks. One of every two victims had directly handled firecrackers.

More than half, or 67 percent, of the injuries occurred in Metro Manila, with the city of Manila again registering the highest number of injuries with 212 of the 599 cases reported in the metropolis.

One of every four victims was a passerby or onlooker, the DOH data revealed. Of the 41 stray bullet injuries, 72 percent occurred in the streets.

"There could be more cases outside the 50 sentinel hospitals," Dayrit admitted.

The latest Iwas Paputok Surveillance report included data from only 31 of the 50 DOH hospitals being monitored by the government.

The DOH earlier announced that there were only 585 injuries due to the New Year revelry, citing reports from 19 sentinel hospitals.

Dayrit said the DOH would use this initial figure to pertain to injuries this year because the DOH's "cut-off" time for the submission of reports was 7 a.m. on Jan. 1.

He said many of the hospitals submitted their reports a day or two later. The latest Iwas Paputok update recorded 366 new cases reported between 7:01 a.m. of Jan. 1 and 7 a.m. of Jan. 2.

"We're watching out for cases of tetanus infection later in the month because not all of those injured were brought to hospitals," Dayrit said.

Tetanus, which occurs when untreated wounds become infected internally, has an incubation period of three to 21 days. Tetanus cases are known to rise in the first month of the year following the New Year celebration.

REFLOATED CASINO

Stanley Ho's floating casino behind the Cultural Center Complex off Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City—which never saw a single gambler after protests and a storm shut it down—gets a complete makeover reportedly under new ownership in time for Valentine's Day. Pasay City officials, however, were clueless about the new owners when the INQUIRER asked them about it. JESS YUSON

No reply to 117 call draws Reyes' ire

By Nelson F. Flores

INTERIOR Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday ordered an investigation into the reported failure of authorities to respond to a distress call made to the 117 Text and Call Hotline of the Department of Interior and Local Government on Saturday.

Reyes issued the order even as he blamed a surfeit of prank calls made to the hotline beginning at 7 p.m. on Friday, New Year's Eve, for the snafu.

"From 7 p.m. Friday to 7 a.m. Saturday, there were over 6,000 calls [made to 117], but only 111 were legitimate emergency calls," Reyes said.

Residents of Boni Serrano Avenue in Quezon City had complained they could not get firefighters to respond quickly to a fire on their street on Saturday morning, New Year's Day, because no one answered the hotline. The fire was finally put out after four hours.

"We tried to get in touch with firefighters, but no one answered 117. We had to go to the nearest fire station by motorcycle just to fetch the firefighters," said resident Leonardo de los Santos in an interview over dzRH radio.

The 117 hotline was patterned after the 911 emergency call system in the United States. The local hotline, however, has only 16 consoles, with incoming calls being queued and the callers being put on hold.

"Definitely we have to improve the system. This is an emergency number, we are still improving it," Reyes said.

Calling for emergency help, meanwhile, has ceased to be free.

Beginning Dec. 1 last year, callers to the 117 hotline have been charged a basic rate of P5.50 per call, with the money going to pay for the "enhancement of the system," Reyes said.

He said the hotline was meant to be a self-sustaining service.

The fee, he added, was also meant to deter pranksters, noting that 98 percent of all calls were crank calls.

The 117 hotline is a joint project of the DILG and the Foundation for Crime Prevention, a non-stock, non-profit corporation providing comprehensive and long-term assistance and support to the Philippine National Police and policemen's families through development programs.

Suspected plotter can't be found, Armed Forces admits

By Alcuin Papa

THIRTEEN days after he gave his guards the slip, Lt. Col. Oscarlito Mapalo cannot be found, the Armed Forces of the Philippines admitted yesterday.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo that Mapalo should return to face court-martial proceedings.

"We are locating him," Abu said.

Abu and other military and defense officials were at AFP headquarters yesterday for the traditional New Year's Call.

Mapalo escaped from Camp Aguinaldo on Dec. 21 last year.

The AFP gave him until Jan. 1 to turn himself in or be dropped from the rolls. The deadline lapsed with no sign of the officer.

"He has to come back because there is a case waiting for him and the longer he stays outside of his restriction, the more he will get into bigger problems," Abu said.

Mapalo was under "restriction to quarters," the military version of house arrest, after he held a press conference at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City in September to denounce the promotion system in the AFP. He complained that he had been bypassed for promotion despite his qualifications.

The AFP responded by saying Mapalo had falsified his information sheet to make it appear that he had a law degree and a master's degree.

He was also charged with violating Article of War 96, for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and Article of War 97, for conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline.

On Dec. 21, Mapalo, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '79, told his guards he was going to visit a classmate who lived near his quarters inside Camp Aguinaldo. The two guards did not accompany him and Mapalo never returned.

Since his escape, the AFP said an additional charge of violating Article of War 70, the rules of confinement, will be slapped on Mapalo.

According to intelligence reports, Mapalo was one of two officers involved in a destabilization plot against the government that was to be carried out during the funeral of actor and opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. on Dec. 22, the day after Mapalo escaped.

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Jalosjos pardon opposed

From page A1

Makati Medical Center because of his illness. He is now reportedly confined at the hospital.

Even so, Jimenez said the government could just arrange for Jalosjos to be treated at the NBP because it was important to avoid the "perception that we tolerate crimes done by powerful people against innocent victims."

Gen. Vicente Vinarao, director of the Bureau of Corrections, yesterday said the findings on the medical condition of Jalosjos, due for release today, would determine whether he would be granted a conditional pardon.

"It is not up to us. Good moral character is not a requirement for a conditional pardon," Vinarao told reporters yesterday, explaining that a conditional pardon is different from a parole.

In a parole, a convict has to serve at least half of his sentence while in conditional pardon, a convict could be released if found to be terminally ill.

Elderly convicts could also be granted a conditional pardon because of advanced age.

"If doctors say that he [Jalosjos] is really sick, then he is a candidate for conditional pardon," said Vinarao.

He said Jalosjos had suffered three strokes since being admitted to the hospital on Dec. 18.

He said his office and the justice department were waiting for Dr. Perry Noble to release his findings.

Jalosjos' mother Angelina made the appeal for her son's release to the President on Dec. 29, said Vinarao.

Gonzalez told a press briefing yesterday that it would be up to the President to decide if Jalosjos should be pardoned although the latter had yet to serve the minimum number of years for the two life sentences imposed on him.

The "only way" that the former Zamboanga legislator could be pardoned was for humanitarian reasons, he said, citing his medical condition.

'Slim' chance

"So, it is up to the President to use (her) judgment if she considers that there are really humanitarian reasons to do so. The power of the President under the Constitution to grant reprieves, or commutations, or pardon, is an undisputed right of the President," Gonzalez said.

But he said Jalosjos' chances of obtaining executive clemency were "slim" since the Board of Pardons had already reviewed his case and reached the conclusion that he was not yet entitled to parole.

Gonzalez said the board reviewed Jalosjos' case after the former congressman asked for executive clemency when Gonzalez visited him at the NBP hospital on Oct. 31, Prisons Awareness Sunday, the culmination of National Correctional Consciousness Week.

He said the board decided there was no ground under the Indeterminate Sentence Law to recommend Jalosjos for a pardon.

Dipolog hospital

Gonzalez said the administration was reviewing another appeal from Jalosjos—that he be confined at the Dipolog provincial hospital "under guard"—when his mother made the appeal to the President last week.

Jalosjos wanted to be transferred to Dipolog City in Zamboanga del Norte because he said his medical bills at the Makati Medical Center have been piling up and the facilities at the NBP hospital in Muntinlupa were inadequate for his medical condition.

"It is too expensive in Makati and he will be closer to his family there (in Dipolog). I told him 'we'll study it' but this was overtaken by the letter of the mother to the President," Gonzalez said.

"The President asked us to look into this again and I already said that the only way is to give him [a] conditional pardon with parole conditions," he added.

He said that if Jalosjos violated his parole conditions, he would be immediately re-arrested.

"There is a safety valve here. But you know, it may be difficult to explain that to the hardliners. They'll say (Jalosjos was pardoned) because (he's) influential, he's rich ... ," Gonzalez said.

Antonio's case

But he cited the case of former Games and Amusement Board official Ambet Antonio, who was granted a conditional pardon before he had served the minimum prison term of his sentence.

Antonio, who was sentenced to 40 years in prison for killing former professional basketball player Arnulfo "Arnie" Tuadles on Nov. 2, 1996, was pardoned on March 3, 2004. His 40-year sentence was reduced to 14 years by the Supreme Court in 2000 after the high court modified the murder case against him to homicide.

"There (have been) many prominent people given conditional or absolute pardon. If that can apply to Antonio, maybe it can also apply to Jalosjos because I don't think that there is any doubt that he is sick," said Gonzalez.

He also pointed out that Jalosjos had served part of his prison term.

"In other words, society has been satisfied, although not in full," Gonzalez said.

Rape victim

The child who cried rape and sent Jalosjos to jail is now "doing very well abroad," according to one of her lawyers.

"She's a Straight-A student at a university, who keeps two jobs to support herself," said children's rights advocate Katrina Legarda, one of the private prosecutors who helped the justice department nail Jalosjos for statutory rape.

Legarda said the girl, who was 12 years old when Jalosjos was convicted in 1997, had been adopted by a Christian missionary couple. She said she got this information on the girl's condition from the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

"This is what children's rights advocates always say: when victims get justice, their lives somehow take a better turn," Legarda said.

She recalled that Jalosjos' conviction in 1997 "emboldened" more child abuse victims to report their ordeal to authorities. From an average of 2,000 cases a year in the 1980s, the reports shot up to 60,000 after the people saw a "big fish" land in jail, she said.

She asked why Jalosjos should be pardoned because of his heart ailment when there were many more ailing or aging prisoners, including another high-profile rape convict, Hubert Webb, a former senator's son who suffers from skin asthma. *With reports from Volt Contreras and Ruth L. Navarro*

FPJ followers launch signature drive . . .

From page A1

ing Council of Volunteers for FPJ (NCCV-FPJ), said the campaign intended to collect at least one million signatures that organizers hoped would convince Roces to lead them in their fight against the Arroyo administration.

"She has said she doesn't want politics, but there are efforts to convince her. Let's just wait and see," Cortez said in an interview.

The signature campaign for Roces would be similar to that launched by the FPJ for President Movement in 2003, and which finally convinced Poe to throw his hat into the May 2004 presidential race.

Poe, who lost to Ms Arroyo by a million votes, filed an election protest before the Supreme Court alleging massive cheating. Until his death on Dec. 14, Poe had not conceded to Ms Arroyo.

Exalted as the "truly elected President," Poe was buried on Dec. 22 after an early morning funeral march joined by legions of his fans and sympathizers. The huge turnout prompted the police and military to go on double alert.

During the week-long wake, several opposition leaders openly suggested the possibility of Poe's popular widow emerging as the leader of the opposition.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the main Laban ng Democratikong Pilipino opposition party, said Roces might be drafted to lead the opposition.

Former senator Francisco Tatad said that Roces was now the "inspiration" of an opposition that he said had been "orphaned" by Poe's death.

On Sunday night, about 1,000 leaders and coordinators of the Poe volunteer group gathered at their headquarters in Mandaluyong for their first reunion since the funeral of their idol 10 days earlier.

Unlike the somber mood during the wake and funeral, the night's gathering was high-spirited, with the crowd breaking into loud chants of "FPJ, FPJ" every so often.

"We are just having fun. We hope this party does not get misinterpreted," said Rey Yang, an NCCV spokesperson.

"Only FPJ died. We are still alive to carry on his fight for truth," said Baby Cruz, an ardent Poe campaigner and one of the leaders in the NCCV women's sector.

Their vow to continue Poe's electoral protest, however, would be limited to pursuing the case with the Supreme Court's Presidential Electoral Tribunal, Cortez said.

"Susan wants to focus her energies on the PET, and we will support her," Cortez said.

A hearing on Poe's complaint, originally scheduled for Dec. 14, has been reset for the second week of January.

ESTRADA arrives at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital for his knee surgery. AFP

Jinggoy laughs off tale . . .

From page A1

fore Estrada went under the knife to have his arthritic knees replaced.

But Estrada's son Sen. Jinggoy Estrada and his spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen gave different, if not enigmatic, answers when the INQUIRER posed the question to them.

The younger Estrada, who flew to Hong Kong on Dec. 29, denied that there had been such a meeting.

"I can't tell you what they discussed because there was no such talk," Jinggoy told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

"*Puro kalokohan yan* (That's rubbish). Tell his enemies to stop making up these tall tales about my father," he added.

Jinggoy said Jimenez could have not been in Hong Kong in the first place because he was still in a US prison serving a two-year sentence for fraud and tax evasion, among other charges.

Midnight cabinet

Jimenez had served as one of Estrada's economic advisers and was a member of the so-called midnight Cabinet that partied and gambled with Estrada almost every night of his presidency.

Asked if it was possible that he did not know about the meeting which supposedly took place before he arrived in Hong Kong, Jinggoy said he would have heard about it from his father.

He said that even if his father did not sleep at the Adventist Hospital on his first night in Hong Kong (on Dec. 27), he was in the company of Caloocan City Rep. Macario "Baby" Asistio and former Sen. Ernesto Maceda then.

Apart from four rooms at the hospital, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post reported that Estrada had rented a 2,700-sq.-ft. flat in Park View where other members of his family stay. Estrada reportedly slept there on his first night in Hong Kong.

Sources in the Estrada camp said the flat was really being rented by Asistio.

Off the record

For his part, Dilangalen, who has since returned to the Philippines, was more circumspect in his reply to the query about an Estrada-Jimenez meeting.

"I don't know what they talked about. And if I knew, I would not tell you about it," he said in jest.

In the middle of the interview, he asked this reporter when the supposed meeting took place and where.

Asked if he would be willing to speak off the record, Dilangalen replied with a laugh: "Off the record, nothing has been recorded."

Asked later what his official reply was to the question of the supposed meeting, Dilangalen said: "Say I never confirmed or denied that they met."

Marcel Crespo, Jimenez's son, told the INQUIRER from Boracay that his father was still in a US prison from which he is to be released this year.

"That's ridiculous," he said, about the purported meeting between his father and Estrada.

Excruciating pain

Jinggoy, meanwhile, said his father's American doctor Christopher Mow finally got the former president to stand up on his new knees yesterday, but only for a short while because of the excruciating pain.

He said Mow joked that with his titanium knees, Estrada would be triggering airport metal detectors and he would need to get a certification saying that he had metal knees.

"He's in a good mood today," Jinggoy said of his father.

Awaiting Ibrahim's call

Dilangalen said Estrada was set to receive a call from former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who was recently freed from prison after being convicted for sodomy.

"Ibrahim called me last night. He was asking for the number of Mr. Estrada. They are close, you know," Dilangalen said.

He said Estrada could not wait to return to the Philippines to begin his three-month rehabilitation and recovery period.

But he said they may ask that Estrada be temporarily be allowed to stay at his house on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan, because his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, where he is detained, is too far from any medical facility.

Estrada denied again on Monday that he would not be returning home to face the corruption charges against him.

He told radio station dzBB he hoped his 3 1/2-year trial would "proceed quickly ... so that the people can know the truth."

"If it was possible, I would return there right now," he said, speaking from Hong Kong's Adventist Hospital. "I was offered twice to leave the country and I did not agree. So why now?"

He said he was still in pain following last week's surgery and it would take about two weeks before he could stand again. *With an AP report*

Correction

IN THE Lifestyle section of the Dec. 29, 2004 issue, a year-ender story—"Sporting Year 2004: Hits and Misses"—on Page D3 misstated that Manny Pacquiao fought Marco Antonio Barrera for the International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Association featherweight titles in May 2004. Pacquiao's opponent was Juan Manuel Marquez, whom Pacquiao decked thrice in the first round but who came back in the next rounds to obtain a draw. Pacquiao beat Barrera in November 2003.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Palabrica, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor; and e-mail address:rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

NOTICE

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Manila, 3 January 2005

(PDI – January 4, 2004)

Investor fights world's largest banking group

From page A1

New York for 25 years, asked regulators to investigate the Philippine unit of Citibank for illegal and fraudulent or, at the very least, unsafe and unsound business practices.

In June 2004, she filed complaints against Citibank with the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board, the Citibank head office in New York, the US Federal Reserve Board, the US Comptroller of Currency and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Unwitting client

Poblador's story is a tale of another unwitting high-net worth client cajoled into buying bonds issued by Benpres Holdings Corp., a month before the Asian currency turmoil erupted in 1997.

Citibank was one of the seven underwriters when Benpres issued $150 million worth of five-year Eurobonds in 1995. The others were JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfel, Chase Manhattan, Morgan Stanley, ING Barings and SBC Warburg.

A few years after the Asian financial crisis, Benpres suspended debt payments, dragged down by its exposure in bleeding Maynilad Water Services and Bayan Telecommunications.

Based on her narration to banking regulators, Poblador deposited $200,000 (then equivalent to P5.7 million at US$1:P28) with the main office of Citibank in Makati City on June 20, 1997. Emily Santos, a bank relationship manager, assisted her.

"I told her I wanted to open a time deposit account of $200,000. I also inquired about 90-day Treasury bills in euros because I know they offered a higher but safe rate. Emily told me the $200,000 was not enough. She said the minimum investment in T-bills was $1 million," Poblador said.

She claimed that Santos strongly suggested that she invest her money in bonds issued by Benpres because they offered a higher rate of return and needed a minimum of $150,000 only.

Get out anytime

Santos told Poblador that a friend of hers had earned $5,000 in just three months on a $150,000-investment in Benpres bonds.

"I inquired whether this was a safe investment and if I could get my money out anytime. Santos falsely assured me that the bond investment was very safe since the Benpres bonds were as good as AAA-rated bonds and that anyway, my placement could be withdrawn anytime," she said.

The reality, of course, is that neither Benpres nor the Republic of the Philippines, for that matter, has ever been rated AAA on foreign or local currency obligations by major international credit rating agencies, like Standard & Poor's, Moody's Investor Service and Fitch Ratings. A rating of AAA means that the bond is of best quality and with the smallest risk. The issuer is exceptionally stable and dependable.

"Since she was so insistent, I said, 'OK, but only for a year,'" Poblador said.

"She also asked me what my comfort margin was as to the rate at which I was willing to cut my losses. I told her 10 percent."

Poblador invested $150,000 in Benpres bonds. The amount was supposed to be divided into bond certificates of $50,000 and $100,000. The rest of her money was placed in dollar time and checking accounts.

Poblador was given a batch of documents to sign, described by Santos as standard forms. Even if she could hardly read the fine print, Poblador said she trustingly signed them and asked for her copies, but Santos allegedly said her copies would be sent to her in a couple of days.

Poblador said she was given a receipt (No. 214066), dated June 20, 1997, that acknowledged that the $200,000 was in payment "for booking on $TD and TM."

"Since that day, however, I was kept in the dark about the real status of my money. But since I was dealing with Citibank, the world's largest international bank, I felt there was no reason to suspect it of any wrongdoing or to question its reputation," she said.

4 years later

What she had signed turned out to be a revocable trust agreement (RTA), which, she said, she was not given the opportunity to study. In fact, she lamented she was given a copy of the RTA four years later and only after she had insisted that she be sent the forms.

"The forms that were faxed to me were the revocable trust agreement, dated June 23, 1997 and an accompanying letter to Citibank, dated July 1, 1997, which bore my signature, although I know I signed them on June 20, 1997," Poblador said.

Another form faxed to her was a copy of the Citibank Global Asset Management confirmation of investment dated July 1, 1997 for the $150,000 Benpres bond.

"To date, I have not received the original copies of any of these forms," she said.

Poblador also belatedly realized that the documents faxed to her had deleted an important provision in which she had a 10-day period from receipt of her copy to notify Citibank of any objections to the investment made.

"Had I been given a copy of the document, I would have opposed the fact that they did not split my initial $150,000 Benpres investment that would allow me to take out my money anytime, as Santos had reassured me," Poblador said.

She claimed that she also realized only much later that the documents she was asked to sign only allowed Santos to buy debt papers or use her money and not to sell the bonds. *(To be continued)*

Citigroup deals under investigation

- IN OCTOBER 2004, the National Association of Securities Dealers fined Citigroup Global Markets Inc. $250,000 in the United States for distributing misleading sales material on hedge funds.

While the fine was small, it was the largest the regulator had assessed in a case involving hedge fund sales by broker-dealers. The regulator said the Citigroup Inc. unit distributed 106 improper pieces of sales literature regarding hedge funds and "funds of hedge funds" between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003.

- British authorities are investigating Citigroup's government bond desk in London. Citigroup had quickly sold on Aug. 2, 2004, $13.5 billion of European government debt, mainly through electronic trades, then bought some of it back at much lower prices an hour later.

Citigroup's controversial bond sale caused immediate and widespread irritation in European markets. Though its activities were not illegal, they angered other bond houses, which said Citigroup had violated an unspoken agreement not to flood the market to drive down prices. Citigroup apologized on the bond deals.

The German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin) is also looking into "possible market manipulation" by Citigroup.

- The US Securities and Exchange Commission began investigating Citigroup last May over accounting for its Argentine business in 2001 and 2002. Citigroup lost $2.2 billion from Argentina's default on $95 billion of debt in late 2001 and the subsequent devaluation of its currency. The bank's loss in Argentina represented 10.7 percent of its pre-tax profit in 2002 of $20.5 billion. It earned $15.3 billion after taxes that year.

- Citigroup paid $2.6 billion last May to settle claims that it was partly to blame for losses suffered by investors who had backed the failed telecoms giant Worldcom. The bank is facing legal action from Worldcom shareholders who lost out two years ago when the firm went bust after admitting it had inflated its profits. The suit was filed on behalf of purchasers of securities of Worldcom between April 29, 1999 and June 25, 2002.

CITIBANK headquarters in Makati City.

- Also in May, the US Federal Reserve fined the bank $70 million for practices in its Baltimore consumer finance unit and for abuses in personal and mortgage loans to low-income and high-risk borrowers nationwide. The penalty was the largest ever imposed by the Fed for consumer lending violations.

- Citigroup suspended in June two top China investment bankers Margaret Ren, daughter-in-law of former Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang, and Earl Yen for providing regulators and the bank itself false information related to IPOs, damaging its credibility after it spent three years beefing up its local staff.

- Enron creditors are suing Citigroup, charging that it failed to say what it knew of the poor state of Enron's finances when it sold $2.4 billion in Enron notes. Citigroup is fighting the suit. In a report in the Wall Street Journal newspaper, it was alleged that Citigroup Inc. arranged an unusual financing technique for Enron Corp. that enabled the energy trader to appear cash-rich rather than saddled with debt, according to internal documents of both companies.

- The US SEC and justice department are examining whether Citigroup Asset Management overcharged mutual fund investors for record-keeping services. *PDI Research*

SOURCES: INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, BUSINESSWEEK, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND POLARIS INSTITUTE AND INNER CITY PRESS WEBSITES

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Powell warns of more violence in Iraq

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Sunday of more violence ahead of Iraq's Jan. 30 elections and said a stronger Iraqi force is needed to help bolster security.

The secretary spoke on the same day that a suicide attacker detonated a car bomb north of Baghdad, killing 19 Iraqis—all but one of them National Guardsmen. It followed a pattern of attacks that target Iraqis who cooperate with American forces.

"We're going to see car bombs. We're going to see this terrible kind of attack take place even more as we get closer to the election," Powell said as he made the talk show rounds on NBC, CBS and CNN. "The people conducting these attacks don't want to see an election. They don't want to see democracy."

Powell said one of the biggest challenges facing the country now is the buildup of Iraqi forces needed to help combat the insurgency. Right now, he said, there are not enough security forces.

"It has to get larger and it has to get more competent. It has to get more equipment. It has to be trained. It has to gain experience," Powell said.

POWELL

More American and coalition troops are not the answer, Powell said. "Iraqis ultimately have to be responsible for their own security."

The United States has about 150,000 troops in the region.

The tenuous security situation, however, will not lead to a delay in the assembly elections, he said. Powell said the United States and the Iraqi interim government are determined to move ahead with the balloting as scheduled.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, who just returned from a trip to Iraq, said even a short delay in balloting would be a mistake.

"Delaying the elections in Iraq would be a victory for the terrorists, and would be a source of tremendous frustration and anger for the majority of Iraqis, who believe they're ready to control their own destiny," Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat, said on ABC's "This Week."

Most Iraqis want to see the vote take place, according to Powell.

"Poll workers are out working. While we see these terrible scenes on television of Iraqi policemen losing their lives, citizens losing their lives, citizens are also coming out to register. They want to have an election, even in the Sunni triangle," he said.

Shiite Muslims, who make up around 60 percent of Iraq's population, have been strong supporters of the elections. But there have been calls for a delay from the country's Sunni minority, which provided much of Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party membership.

The largest Sunni Muslim political group in Iraq announced last week that it would not participate in the elections. It said security was worsening and Iraqis did not understand the political process well enough to vote. *AP*

Car bomb explodes near Iraqi PM's headquarters

BAGHDAD—A suicide bomber driving a taxi killed two people near the headquarters of interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party in Baghdad on Monday as insurgents pressed a bloody campaign to disrupt a Jan. 30 election.

The bomber tried to target a security checkpoint on the road leading to the party's offices in western Baghdad but collided with a police pick-up truck and exploded, setting nearby vehicles ablaze and sending up plumes of black smoke.

The blast, which also wounded at least 23 people, came a day after suicide car bombers struck a bus packed with Iraqi National Guards north of Baghdad, killing 26 people.

The attacks were the latest in a spree of bombings and assassinations by Sunni insurgents seeking to drive out US-led forces, cripple the interim government and its fledgling security forces and scare voters away from the polls.

Monday's blast hit a checkpoint about a kilometer from the offices of Allawi's Iraqi National Accord bloc just minutes before the party had been due to announce its election candidates.

A senior government official said Allawi, a secular Shiite who leads Iraq's US-backed government, was safe and had not been anywhere near the scene of the attack.

"Most of the casualties have been among the security forces manning the checkpoint. No one senior from the Iraqi National Accord was hurt," the official said.

Witnesses and officials said at least two people were killed in the blast near a busy intersection on Zaytoun Street.

Ambulances rushed to the scene, where wounded lay on the ground as police fired in the air to clear the area.

On Sunday, two insurgents in an explosives-laden vehicle veered into the path of the bus and blew it up outside a US military base near the town of Balad, north of Baghdad.

Hours later, guerrillas killed three policemen on patrol close to neighboring Samarra, and shot dead a member of the city's governing council as well as his driver and bodyguard.

Those attacks took place in the Sunni heartland, where loyalty to deposed dictator Saddam Hussein runs deep.

A National Guard officer said Sunday's car bomb killed 25 soldiers on the way to their posts. A civilian bystander also died in the blast.

US and Iraqi officials ushered in the New Year with warnings of an expected spike in preelection assaults by insurgents but vowed to do everything possible to allow voters to go safely to polling places. *Reuters*

AN IRAQ fireman sprays water on destroyed vehicles after a car bomb exploded targeting a checkpoint near the party headquarters of Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi in western Baghdad Jan. 3. REUTERS

Peruvian military rebels to surrender

LIMA—Renegade combat veterans that captured a police station in a Peruvian town and killed at least four police officers in fighting said Sunday they would lay down their arms if government forces refrain from attacking.

Some 150 former soldiers belonging to a nationalist group seized a police station in the southeastern Andean town of Andahuaylas early Saturday, taking 11 officers hostage and blocking roads in the city.

At least four police officers were killed when some 300 heavily armed police tried to storm rebel positions in the city on Sunday.

The group leader, retired army major Antauro Humala, told reporters he wants government forces to "abstain from attacking us, shooting at us, only then we will put down our arms."

"I accept full responsibility for my troops," said Humala. "I am their chief and I ordered the capture of the police station."

Humala later said his followers would surrender at noon Monday in the town square "in presence of the people." He promised his forces would not open fire until then, "but only if the other side does not harass or shoot at us."

The announcement came after Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero demanded that the group surrender and promised that their lives would be spared.

The former soldiers are mostly veterans from the 1995 war with Ecuador and the war with the Shining Path Maoist rebels in the 1980s and 1990s. They are calling for the resignation of President Alejandro Toledo, saying he is a corrupt sellout to foreign investors.

Humala is the brother of Ollanta Humala, an army lieutenant colonel forced into retirement on Dec. 31. Ollanta Humala led a month-long military uprising in October 2000 against the government of Alberto Fujimori, who resigned in November 2000 amid a corruption scandal.

The Humala brothers were briefly imprisoned, but pardoned after Fujimori left office and allowed to stay in the army.

Humala told reporters he spoke by telephone with his brother, who is in South Korea, where he served as the military attache at Peru's embassy. Ollanta Humala urged the rebels to put down their arms and negotiate with the government.

Toledo, who has a nationwide approval rating of around 11 percent, said Sunday the government would act with "a firm hand" to quell the revolt.

"Democracy yes, but a firm hand" against "those who have seized government buildings, who have killed and taken hostages—this my government will not permit," Toledo told reporters after visiting police wounded in an assault on the rebels' positions.

Ferrero denied rumors that police and army troops were about to storm the area, even though town residents earlier called Lima radio stations with reports of gunfire.

The main streets of Andahuaylas, population 30,000 and located some 400 km southeast of Lima, were blocked by armed members of the renegade group, witnesses said.

Toledo on Saturday declared a regional state of emergency and dispatched additional police and soldiers to the region.

In an earlier interview Antauro Humala said his brother was en route to Peru from South Korea to lead the movement. *AFP*

Abbas rebukes militants over rocket attacks

JABALIYA, Gaza Strip—Palestinian presidential election favorite Mahmud Abbas on Sunday rebuked militants for launching rocket attacks into Israel, as the Army ended its latest incursion in the northern Gaza Strip aimed at countering the tactic.

Around 50 tanks and armored vehicles had trundled into the Beit Hanun area near the Erez border crossing between Israel and the Palestinian territory Sunday morning, after a new spate of rocket attacks which wounded at least three Israelis.

But by the late evening witnesses said that the tanks and armored vehicles had pulled back, with public television saying the Army put a halt to the incursion to stave off accusations it was stirring trouble ahead of the Palestinian election on Jan. 9.

The latest incursion, in which two Palestinians were wounded, came just hours after the Army withdrew from the Khan Yunis area of southern Gaza where it had been operating to stop militants firing rockets and mortars at nearby Israeli settlements.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has given the military a free rein to put a halt to rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups.

Abbas accused the Israelis of trying to disrupt the Jan. 9 election with its offensives but he later also criticized the militants behind the rocket attacks when he addressed a rally in northern Gaza.

"I say to them: 'This is not the time for this kind of act,'" he told 4,000 supporters in Jabaliya, some five km south of Beit Hanun.

"Do not give Israel more reason to attack us," he added.

While Abbas did not single out any particular faction, the Islamist group Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, said in a statement it fired three rockets at the southern Israeli town of Sderot early Sunday.

"We promise God and the Palestinian people that we will continue to follow the path of resistance and struggle and we will continue to shell the Zionist settlements until the enemy leaves our land," said the statement. *AFP*

Jewish settlers expect soldiers to defy orders

JERUSALEM—Jewish settler leaders have warned Israel's army chief that hundreds, and possibly thousands, of soldiers could refuse to carry out orders to evacuate Gaza Strip settlers if the government goes ahead with a plan to withdraw from the coastal area later this year.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from all Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements beginning in July has drawn stiff opposition from hardliners in his own government and Jewish settlers.

At a meeting late Sunday with the Army's top brass, settler leaders said the military has to prepare for the possibility of mass insubordination during the evacuation, and the impact such a phenomenon would have on Israeli society.

Jewish settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein—who last month convinced the Yesha Settlers' Council to announce it will break the law when opposing the pullout plan—said thousands of soldiers could refuse to carry out the evacuation orders.

"I have to be honest with the heads of the Army about where the implementation of this draconian law will lead," Wallerstein told Israel's Army Radio on Monday. *AP*

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Protests mount vs Argentine disco fire

BUENOS AIRES—Protests mounted on Sunday as families and friends mourned the more than 180 young people killed in a blaze at a rock club.

They complained that authorities let it operate with locked emergency doors, inflammable soundproofing and dangerous overcrowding.

Three days after a flare ignited the ceiling of the Cromagnon Republic during a concert, the death toll rose by five to 182, adding to pressure on Buenos Aires City Hall to account for its role in one of Argentina's worst disasters.

More than 260 of the 726 injured remain hospitalized, 117 of them in intensive care, the director of the city's emergency medical services, Julio Salinas, said.

Although most of the victims were teenagers, some were children and babies because the club allowed a makeshift child-care center to operate in the women's bathroom, witnesses told police.

As more than 90 burials took place on Sunday, hundreds of protesters of all ages met near the club, where a shrine made of flowers, candles, letters and victims' personal effects grows by the day. A Roman Catholic priest led prayers by the barriers erected by police to keep people away from the club.

For the second straight day, many marched toward City Hall to call for the resignation of Mayor Anibal Ibarra for allowing Cromagnon to exist.

"The majority of us want the people responsible for this to go to prison forever, and we want Ibarra to resign," said Rocio Ramirez, 16, a fan of the band Callejeros that played that night. He was late for Thursday's concert.

Protest organizers have called a new march for Monday evening from the club in the gritty Once district to City Hall downtown.

"I have a feeling that a strong social movement is underway," said Fabian Chavez, a 43-year-old lawyer who has come to the club to pray for the last two days, although he knows no victims. "People are really affected by this."

City security secretary Juan Carlos Lopez, in charge of inspections of public venues, accepted his responsibility in the tragedy and resigned late Saturday to become the first political victim of the fire.

"There was an emergency exit the size of a truck and if it had been open we would have some injured but not this stupid tragedy," Lopez told local radio on Sunday. Reuters

Most of the victims died of smoke inhalation, but some of the casualties suffered burns and injuries in the stampede. *Reuters*

RELATIVES and friends of Jaqueline Santillan comfort each other during her funeral in a Buenos Aires' cemetery Jan. 1. She perished in the Dec. 30 disco fire. REUTERS

China's population to hit 1.3B Thursday

BEIJING—The population in China, the world's most populous nation, will officially hit 1.3 billion this week, the state-run Xinhua news agency said Monday, citing government figures.

The country's population has been close to 1.3 billion of the world's more than six billion people and has been rounded up to that figure in recent years.

But it will only officially reach that exact number by Thursday, according to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) calculations, Xinhua said.

State media credited the government's population-control policies over the past 30 years for delaying the date of arrival at the 1.3 billion figure by four years.

"However, the country would face new and severe challenges with its population climbing to the level of 1.3 billion," Xinhua quoted an official with the State Commission for Population and Family Planning saying.

The huge population is putting pressure on already insufficient natural resources and jobs.

It is expected to increase by about 10 million people annually to reach a peak of 1.46 billion in the mid-2030s, state media had quoted population experts saying last year. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Canada's 2nd mad cow case

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—A final laboratory test has confirmed an Alberta dairy cow had mad cow disease, the second case Canada has found in its herd, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said on Sunday. Veterinary officials said on Thursday that preliminary tests had been positive for the brain-wasting mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). "Confirming BSE in this animal is not unexpected," the agency said in a news release, noting it was born before feed rules designed to stop the spread of the disease. The United States, Canada's largest export market, announced last week it would begin to accept imports of young, live cattle thought to be at low risk for the disease from March 7, and US officials said on Thursday there were no plans to change that, despite the preliminary positive test. The animal did not enter the human food or animal feed supply and there was no risk to the public. Canada's first homegrown case of mad cow disease was found in May 2003 and cost export-dependent farmers an estimated C$5 billion ($4.2 billion) as trade partners closed their borders to Canadian beef and cattle. *Reuters*

New Madagascar currency

ANTANANARIVO—Madagascar on Monday abandoned the Malagasy franc in a bid to sweep away the last vestiges of its colonial era, switching to the new ariary currency 80 years after the French first imposed the franc on the Indian Ocean island. Officials say President Marc Ravalomanana made the change to symbolize his government's hopes for the independence of the island's economy, more than four decades after gaining political freedom from France. Another reason was to end the widespread circulation of falsified Malagasy franc notes throughout the island. The exchange rate on Monday stood at 1,869 ariary to the US dollar, which was where the central bank set the rate on Thursday, the last trading day of the Malagasy franc. On its last day of trading the Malagasy franc traded at about 9,250 to the dollar. The central bank launched the new ariary notes and coins at five times parity with the Malagasy franc on July 31, 2003 and has since gradually phased out the franc. From Monday, all contracts will have to be written and all prices quoted in ariary. France annexed Madagascar in 1896 and the island finally won independence in 1960. The ariary, which means "5 units," was the name of a pre-colonial currency introduced by Arab traders who settled on the northeast of the island in the 18th and 19th centuries, before France introduced the franc in 1925. *Reuters*

Croatia's president wins

ZAGREB—Croatia's incumbent President Stipe Mesic overwhelmingly won the first round of elections taking 49 percent of the vote, official results showed Monday, but faces a runoff to win a second five-year term to lead the country as it seeks to join the EU. Mesic will face conservative Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor, who received 20.18 percent of Sunday's vote, in the Jan. 16 runoff, the electoral commission said citing results of 99 percent of polling stations. A jubilant Mesic urged voters to turn out in big numbers for the runoff, following a low turnout of 51 percent on Sunday, pledging a better future. The 70-year-old Mesic was heavily favored to win the vote to lead the former war-torn Yugoslav republic, with exit polls released immediately after voting stations closed showing he might win the 50 percent needed to avoid the runoff. Wealthy Croatian-US businessman Boris Miksic finished third with 17.8 percent of the vote, the electoral commission said. Exit polls had put Miksic ahead of Kosor, in what would have been a major humiliation for her ruling conservative Croatian Democratic Union. *AFP*

Shirley Chisholm, first black woman elected to US Congress, dies at 80

MIAMI—Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to the US Congress and an outspoken advocate for women and minorities during seven terms in the House of Representatives, died near Daytona Beach, friends said. She was 80.

CHISHOLM

"She was our Moses that opened the Red Sea for us," Robert E. Williams, president of the NAACP in Flagler County, told The Associated Press late Sunday. He did not have the details of her death on Saturday.

Chisholm, who was raised in a predominantly black New York City neighborhood and was elected to the US House in 1968, was a riveting speaker who often criticized Congress as being too clubby and unresponsive.

"My greatest political asset, which professional politicians fear, is my mouth, out of which come all kinds of things one shouldn't always discuss for reasons of political expediency," she told voters.

She went to Congress to represent New York the same year Richard Nixon was elected to the White House and served until two years into Ronald Reagan's tenure as president. She also was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969.

Newly elected, she was assigned to the House agriculture committee, which she felt was irrelevant to her urban constituency. In an unheard of move, she demanded reassignment and got switched to the veterans affairs committee.

Not long afterward she voted for Hale Boggs, who was white, over John Conyers, who was black, for majority leader. Boggs rewarded her with a place on the prized education and labor committee and she was its third ranking member when she left.

She ran for the Democratic nomination for the presidency in 1972. When rival candidate and ideological opposite George Wallace was shot, she visited him in the hospital—an act that appalled her followers.

"He said, 'What are your people going to say?' I said: 'I know what they're going to say. But I wouldn't want what happened to you to happen to anyone.' He cried and cried," she recalled.

And when she needed support to extend the minimum wage to domestic workers two years later, it was Wallace who got her the votes from Southern members of Congress.

Pragmatism and power were watchwords. "Women have learned to flex their political muscles. You got to flex that muscle to get what you want," she said during her presidential campaign.

In her book, "Unbought and Unbossed," she recounted the campaign that brought her to Congress and wrote of her concerns about that body. *AP*

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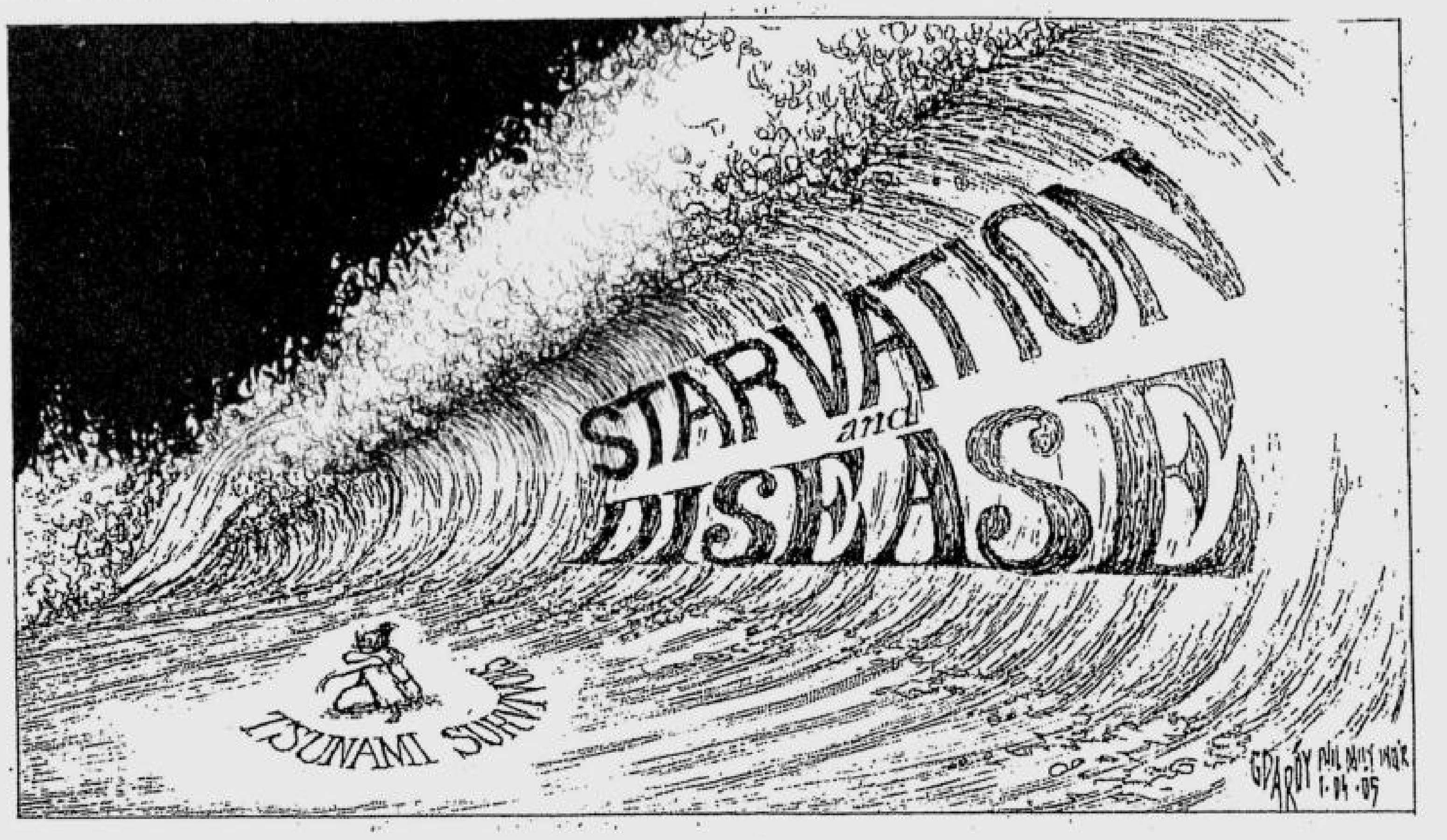

'Seeds of time'

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Juan L. Mercado

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Delayed reform left us little elbow room. That little is whittled away further by a barely literate electorate that a failed educational system mass produces. Out of every 100 kids who enroll in public school, 33 drop out before Grade six because of poverty. "Two boys to every girl repeat grades from the first to third grades," notes the UN report, "A Common View, A Common Journey." "The ratio deteriorates to nearly three boys for every girl repeating in the first year alone" in high school.

Can a nation of dropouts, fed on a diet of soap operas, survive in cyberspace 21st century?

Contrast the vision of our "leaders" with that of their foreign counterparts. Joseph Estrada offers "alternative leadership." His vocabulary is limited to his knee-caps and wangling yet another pass from house arrest.

Before the tsunami hit Banda Aceh, Indonesian President Susilo Yudhono said his concerns could be "boiled down to two words: China and India." Beijing's economic clout and India's advances are altering the region's strategic balance.

How the world responds to "the rise of India and China in the coming decades will define this century," Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong writes in the Economist. "Better for Asia to have two prospering and stable giants, rather than two backward and troubled ones."

But change demands painful adjustments. "There'll be winners and losers," Lee warns. "Countries which prepare their peoples for the changes, and move early to anticipate the strategic shifts, will have the advantage…"

Governments must "look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow and which will not." They need to persuade peoples what needs to be done, set clear directions and shift policies where called for, Lee says. "The starkness of our situation leaves no room for complacent delusions," he adds.

Tell that to our pygmies—and a people content to be wheeled to the poor house, high on pork barrel and an "Eat Bulaga" level of national discourse.

(*E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph*)

Demons

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I NEVER much like exploding firecrackers on New Year's Eve. My apologies to the victims, but I've never sympathized with those who find themselves in hospitals screaming in pain from missing fingers or even hands in the worst cases from fooling around with the more dangerous varieties. It's completely self-inflicted. Indeed, unlike suicide, which harms only oneself, the injury is acquired in the course of posing harm to others.

For some reason, some people like to explode firecrackers days before New Year in places that are calculated to annoy others, and cause high blood pressure, if not heart attacks, among the elderly. Just for the fun of it.

I know it's tradition, and tradition says making that kind of racket on New Year's Eve helps to drive demons away. And no demons are worth more driving away than the ones that bedeviled not just this country but this whole planet last year. For reasons known only to them, they appeared to have chosen 2004 as the year to hold their plenary meeting in. The disasters last year, personal and social, minor and cataclysmic, were just too mind-boggling. I'm not particularly given to horoscopes and astrology, I know calendars are a human invention to measure time, but boy am I glad we're out of that year. Maybe the new one will bring better news.

But as I was saying, I know it is tradition, but traditions are always made to be broken, or changed. Something the resolutely tradition-bound Tevye of "Fiddler on the Roof" himself discovered. Traditions are only as good as the reasons for them remain alive and vital. Not so when they are dead and inert. Well before an apocalyptic earthquake/tsunami hit Sumatra and several Southeast and South Asian countries a week ago, I already wanted to write a column urging this country, particularly Metro Manila, to not explode firecrackers at the end of the year.

The reason for it was patent. The eastern seaboard of Luzon, particularly the Quezon part of it, had just been pummeled by three powerful storms coming one after the other. They left a world in shambles, mud covering houses, churches and fields; logs and the bodies of humans and animals washed up to shore, by themselves an obdurate statement about cause and effect; and whole communities robbed of their hopes and dreams, apart from families their loved ones. The folks there were dying from lack of food and water, and the first trucks loaded with relief goods that rumbled onto the place had to be protected by soldiers from riots. Dogs had gotten rabid.

Officials were saying it would take at least six months to merely start to rehabilitate the place. You saw the photographs, and you knew it was so.

Fr. Boy Makabenta, parish priest of Infanta, would tell me later Infanta was like a ghost town last Christmas. Most of the residents left for Manila to join their relatives and forget about their problems for a while. But the folks from the barrio trekked there full force to attend the Misa de Gallo and fall on their knees in thanksgiving for having been spared. For the first time, said Father Boy, they didn't have to wait for the parishioners to come to church on time. They were there at crack of dawn, filling the church to the rafters.

I couldn't imagine in light of this how any Filipino could wish to make merry by exploding firecrackers on New Year's Eve. Or indeed could wish to drive demons away in this way. There was a very real demon among us, which was Hunger or Deprivation, or whatever other names he goes by, and the only way he was going to be exorcised was for people to pitch in and lend a helping hand. It was almost criminal to see how we could allow money that could be spent to ease the plight of our brothers and sisters in Quezon to quite literally go up in smoke.

Then came the catastrophic events of a week ago, an earthquake of exceptional violence hitting Sumatra and sending the sea heaving onto the shores of several countries. The spectacle of grief and misery was there for everyone to see, in the grim images that flashed on TV screens from Banda Aceh, from Phuket, from the Maldives. I remember that Jamie Foxx's character in "Collateral" had a picture of Maldives on his taxi, his reminder that there was a paradise on earth. There was little left of paradise after the tsunami.

I was completely embarrassed when BBC reported on how the world celebrated New Year's Eve, which was that most of it did not celebrate it at all. On one hand, it showed Filipinos dancing in Ayala and exploding firecrackers in their homes. On the other it showed Indonesians, Thais, Sri Lankans, and even the peoples of countries who had not fallen victim to the earthquake and tsunami holding candles or prostrating themselves in temples in supplication or silent prayer for the dead. Sweden cancelled all traditional festivities and declared its intention to donate whatever money it could raise from it to the victims.

Tradition arises from common sense, it does not take the place of common sense. Are we so given to partying and having a good time we cannot forego it in the face of wretched tragedy? I am not saying we should lapse into depression, or joylessness, on New Year's Eve. I am saying we should be more sensitive to the sensibilities of others. There are ways to celebrate life or express thanksgiving without rubbing salt on other people's wounds. The only happy note last Friday was that the din wasn't as loud and as long as in previous New Year's Eves. But you still wonder how much rice and canned goods could have been bought by the money that went to that racket. Which doesn't drive demons away anyway, for one good reason:

The demons are not outside of us. They're right inside us.

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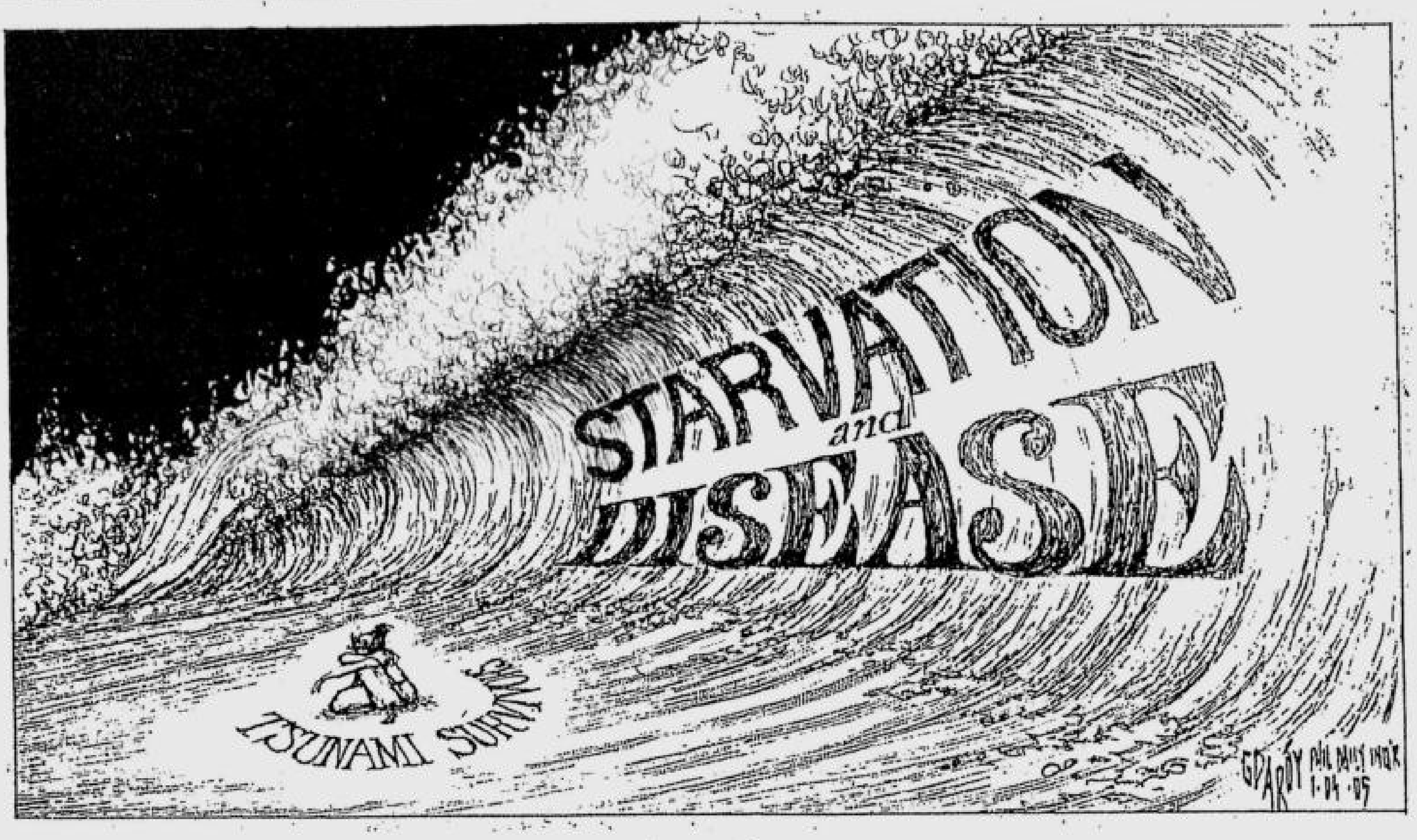

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Delayed reform left us little elbow room. That little is whittled away further by a barely literate electorate that a failed educational system mass produces. Out of every 100 kids who enroll in public school, 33 drop out before Grade six because of poverty. "Two boys to every girl repeat grades from the first to third grades," notes the UN report, "A Common View, A Common Journey." "The ratio deteriorates to nearly three boys for every girl repeating in the first year alone" in high school.

Can a nation of dropouts, fed on a diet of soap operas, survive in cyberspace 21st century?

Contrast the vision of our "leaders" with that of their foreign counterparts. Joseph Estrada offers "alternative leadership." His vocabulary is limited to his knee-caps and wangling yet another pass from house arrest.

Before the tsunami hit Banda Aceh, Indonesian President Susilo Yudhono said his concerns could be "boiled down to two words: China and India." Beijing's economic clout and India's advances are altering the region's strategic balance.

How the world responds to "the rise of India and China in the coming decades will define this century," Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong writes in the Economist. "Better for Asia to have two prospering and stable giants, rather than two backward and troubled ones."

But change demands painful adjustments. "There'll be winners and losers," Lee warns. "Countries which prepare their peoples for the changes, and move early to anticipate the strategic shifts, will have the advantage…"

Governments must "look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow and which will not." They need to persuade peoples what needs to be done, set clear directions and shift policies where called for, Lee says. "The starkness of our situation leaves no room for complacent delusions," he adds.

Tell that to our pygmies—and a people content to be wheeled to the poor house, high on pork barrel and an "Eat Bulaga" level of national discourse.

(*E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph*)

Demons

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I NEVER much like exploding firecrackers on New Year's Eve. My apologies to the victims, but I've never sympathized with those who find themselves in hospitals screaming in pain from missing fingers or even hands in the worst cases from fooling around with the more dangerous varieties. It's completely self-inflicted. Indeed, unlike suicide, which harms only oneself, the injury is acquired in the course of posing harm to others.

For some reason, some people like to explode firecrackers days before New Year in places that are calculated to annoy others, and cause high blood pressure, if not heart attacks, among the elderly. Just for the fun of it.

I know it's tradition, and tradition says making that kind of racket on New Year's Eve helps to drive demons away. And no demons are worth more driving away than the ones that bedeviled not just this country but this whole planet last year. For reasons known only to them, they appeared to have chosen 2004 as the year to hold their plenary meeting in. The disasters last year, personal and social, minor and cataclysmic, were just too mind-boggling. I'm not particularly given to horoscopes and astrology, I know calendars are a human invention to measure time, but boy am I glad we're out of that year. Maybe the new one will bring better news.

But as I was saying, I know it is tradition, but traditions are always made to be broken, or changed. Something the resolutely tradition-bound Tevye of "Fiddler on the Roof" himself discovered. Traditions are only as good as the reasons for them remain alive and vital. Not so when they are dead and inert. Well before an apocalyptic earthquake/tsunami hit Sumatra and several Southeast and South Asian countries a week ago, I already wanted to write a column urging this country, particularly Metro Manila, to not explode firecrackers at the end of the year.

The reason for it was patent. The eastern seaboard of Luzon, particularly the Quezon part of it, had just been pummeled by three powerful storms coming one after the other. They left a world in shambles, mud covering houses, churches and fields; logs and the bodies of humans and animals washed up to shore, by themselves an obdurate statement about cause and effect; and whole communities robbed of their hopes and dreams, apart from families their loved ones. The folks there were dying from lack of food and water, and the first trucks loaded with relief goods that rumbled onto the place had to be protected by soldiers from riots. Dogs had gotten rabid.

Officials were saying it would take at least six months to merely start to rehabilitate the place. You saw the photographs, and you knew it was so.

Fr. Boy Makabenta, parish priest of Infanta, would tell me later Infanta was like a ghost town last Christmas. Most of the residents left for Manila to join their relatives and forget about their problems for a while. But the folks from the barrio trekked there full force to attend the Misa de Gallo and fall on their knees in thanksgiving for having been spared. For the first time, said Father Boy, they didn't have to wait for the parishioners to come to church on time. They were there at crack of dawn, filling the church to the rafters.

I couldn't imagine in light of this how any Filipino could wish to make merry by exploding firecrackers on New Year's Eve. Or indeed could wish to drive demons away in this way. There was a very real demon among us, which was Hunger or Deprivation, or whatever other names he goes by, and the only way he was going to be exorcised was for people to pitch in and lend a helping hand. It was almost criminal to see how we could allow money that could be spent to ease the plight of our brothers and sisters in Quezon to quite literally go up in smoke.

Then came the catastrophic events of a week ago, an earthquake of exceptional violence hitting Sumatra and sending the sea heaving onto the shores of several countries. The spectacle of grief and misery was there for everyone to see, in the grim images that flashed on TV screens from Banda Aceh, from Phuket, from the Maldives. I remember that Jamie Foxx's character in "Collateral" had a picture of Maldives on his taxi, his reminder that there was a paradise on earth. There was little left of paradise after the tsunami.

I was completely embarrassed when BBC reported on how the world celebrated New Year's Eve, which was that most of it did not celebrate it at all. On one hand, it showed Filipinos dancing in Ayala and exploding firecrackers in their homes. On the other it showed Indonesians, Thais, Sri Lankans, and even the peoples of countries who had not fallen victim to the earthquake and tsunami holding candles or prostrating themselves in temples in supplication or silent prayer for the dead. Sweden cancelled all traditional festivities and declared its intention to donate whatever money it could raise from it to the victims.

Tradition arises from common sense, it does not take the place of common sense. Are we so given to partying and having a good time we cannot forego it in the face of wretched tragedy? I am not saying we should lapse into depression, or joylessness, on New Year's Eve. I am saying we should be more sensitive to the sensibilities of others. There are ways to celebrate life or express thanksgiving without rubbing salt on other people's wounds. The only happy note last Friday was that the din wasn't as loud and as long as in previous New Year's Eves. But you still wonder how much rice and canned goods could have been bought by the money that went to that racket. Which doesn't drive demons away anyway, for one good reason:

The demons are not outside of us. They're right inside us.

Could KC have been saved?

COMMENTARY

Lito Lichauco

NEWSPAPER reports on the tragic death of KC de Venecia were filled with all sorts of "what ifs." From where I sit and from personal knowledge and experience, several facts are apparent.

First, the fire at the De Venecia residence was a standard residential fire with the normal levels of heat and flames. It was not an industrial—or "hazardous materials"—fire.

While the fire was already extremely large when the Makati Fire Department (MFD) arrived, a pair of properly trained firefighters with complete firefighting gear and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and proper training could have still gone in and, perhaps, rescued KC.

No "asbestos suit" was needed, contrary to what some newspapers reported. In fact, asbestos suits are no longer used. They have been replaced by aluminized suits which are also used in fighting aircraft and chemical fires; they are expendable after two or three uses.

Secondly, the MFD was called only after the local security personnel and the Dasmariñas fire department could no longer control the fire. The MFD firemen arrived at the scene nine minutes after the call, but by then the fire had been raging for almost 30 minutes.

According to Chief Insp. Rachel Avila, MFD officer-in-charge, had they been notified right away, they could have gotten there when the fire was not yet as intense.

According to Avila, the best way to ensure that fire departments are notified immediately about a fire is through an automatic fire alarm system installed in homes and establishments. The system should have the ability to dial out to an approved 24-hour monitoring station, as required under the Philippine Fire Code.

But even if the MFDD had received the alarm at the start of the fire and not 20 minutes later, the lack of proper structural firefighting gear would still have been a problem.

The fact is our firefighters are woefully equipped. Firefighters in most countries use equipment that are designed for structural firefighting to protect themselves at certain levels of heat and flames for a certain period. Such equipment carry rating standards.

In the US, the standard is NFPA71; in Europe, it is CEN.

A firefighter should be equipped with at least a coat, trousers, a helmet, boots and gloves; a CEN- or NFPA-rated set of these would cost around P60,000.

In addition, each fire truck should be equipped with several complete SCBAs to enable firemen to enter a structure on fire, attack the fire and rescue trapped persons. A CEN- or NFPA-rated SCBA would cost around P180,000.

Most of our firefighters do not have these gear. The responding MFD unit does have SCBAs. The fact that it does is more of an exception rather than the norm. While they have fire coats, boots and helmets, they have no trousers.

To save money, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the government agency primarily responsible for providing fire departments with the necessary firefighting equipment and gear, has been purchasing just the coats—without the pants—thinking that the firemen don't really need the pants; and so that they can buy more coats. And therein lies the problem: The firefighters gear is only as reliable as its weakest link. Without the trousers and the SCBA, all that our firefighters can do is "defensive firefighting," meaning, they can use their fire hoses only from the outside.

At present, the national office of the BFP is in the process of bidding a contract for the supply of SCBAs and coats. The approved budget for the coats is P10.4 million. Nothing has been allocated for trousers. So we will have 550 firefighters with coats but no firefighter's pants. Wouldn't it be better to have 300 well-equipped firefighters than 550 who are "half-equipped."

Even worse is the bidding for SCBA. It was conducted on July 28. If the procurement law had been followed, an award would have been made shortly thereafter. A 90-day delivery period was called for under the bidding, so 40 brand-new SCBAs could have been available when fire broke out at the De Venecia residence and might have made poor KC's rescue.

The procurement law (RA 9184) calls for transparent, non-discriminatory bidding that should be completed within a maximum period of 90 days. However, it took the BFD's Bids and Awards Committed over three months to conduct the bidding. And in the end, the BAC declared it a failure because of an oversight in the procedures, the very same procedures followed in a parallel bidding involving radios, which was conducted on the same day and for which the contract was awarded to the only bidding participant.

One can only speculate about the real reason for the BFP's decision to declare the bidding a failure. But consider this: with four of the five original bidders declared ineligible for failing to comply with the necessary documentation, only one bidder was found eligible. And it was only after it found out who was eligible that the BAC decided to declare the bidding a failure and submit the contract to another bidding. Conveniently, one of the ineligible bidders (perhaps their favored supplier) is bidding again now with another chance to be eligible.

Until we see a reformed BFP that strictly follows the rules for RA 9184, we will see more and more of these tragedies when fire strikes.

Lito Lichauco is in the business of fire alarm monitoring and fire detection devices and equipment.

Respect is the first step towards healing

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE COVER illustration, by artist Katti Sta. Ana, of the book "Surviving the Odds: Finding Hope in Abused Children's Life Stories," shows a girl aboard a small banca traversing treacherous waters populated by menacing creatures. But far from looking frightened or nervous, the girl is shown facing the horizon with confidence, rowing across the swirling sea with self-assurance.

Like the girl on the cover, the children who tell their stories to the authors come equipped with their own boats and oars, skills and personal qualities that allow them to navigate through crises without losing hope or surrendering to the elements. These are children, the authors remind us, who have undergone some of the most horrendous experiences any person could go through, from sexual abuse to violence, neglect to exploitation, poverty and homelessness. And yet, as the authors found, the children showed evidence of resilience, the ability to "bounce back" from adversity, deal with pain and difficulty, and even continue believing in a better, kinder future for themselves.

In the previous column, several "resilience themes" were discussed, including the ability to "roll with the punches" and to learn from adversity, belief in oneself, and forbearance or *pagtitiis*. We'll now look into the other themes.

* * *

"FINDING happiness in situations which call for despair is a frequent theme in the stories of children who survive abuse," the book notes. An example is "Mario," a survivor of physical abuse who was well-loved by his fellow wards at the home where his mother left him for his sunny personality and ability to find humor even in grim situations.

The authors are nothing but admiring of the children they talked with: "Listening to some of the stories of the children, one is awed by their ability to keep sane when tragedies seem to be an ever-present reality in their lives." The stories told by resilient girl survivors, who underwent trauma ranging from childhood sexual abuse to physical assault, sound all the more dramatic when contrasted with those of other girls who, despite living through less horrific situations, can't seem to hold themselves together, acting out through fainting spells that seem to be more psychological than physical in origin.

"*Kabutihang loob* (inner goodness)" is another special quality of resilient children, the authors found. This "good character" is demonstrated through such behavior as relating well with people, being respectful and helpful, a refusal to harbor malice or bitterness, even if their life experience had shown them nothing but the dark side of life.

An "ethical mindset," or "a firm sense of what is right and wrong" also seems evident among resilient survivors. The researchers assert that resilience does not only connote toughness but also "the preservation of positive human qualities."

Other qualities identified by the research: the ability to recover from not just physical but also mental, emotional and even spiritual injury inflicted by abuse; the skill to "weave meaning from abusive experiences"; sensitivity to other people's views and feelings; ability to see even the most painful of situations as temporary; and the ability to resist temptation and exercise self-restraint.

* * *

CHILDREN are not either "resilient" or "not resilient," the authors emphasize. Rather, it would be better to describe them as either "more resilient" or "less resilient." While some children seem born with the personality traits and characteristics that allow them to bounce back easily from painful experiences, those who are "less resilient" can learn the skills they need to cope with crisis. Abused children have demonstrated an awesome capacity to "learn from experience," the authors note.

But growing in resilience, the study found, is not a one-time accomplishment, but rather "a process which has its ebbs and flows, its highs and lows." Sadness and trauma can revisit even a child who seems to have "recovered," while even the most damaged of children can find moments of clarity and self-preservation.

Having found that "resilience can be learned," the authors point the way to the next step: "How do we facilitate the flow of resilience among abused children?" As they point out: "Part of the role of child rights advocates working in NGOs and other support service institutions is to try to institute programs that will enhance the children's capacity to be resilient, especially those whom we consider to be less resilient."

The book then offers several program and counseling interventions that caregivers and institutions can adopt to develop and encourage the various "resilience themes" identified as crucial to survival of abuse.

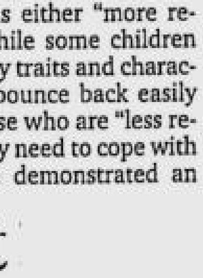
* * *

BEYOND the practical aspects, though, what makes "Surviving the Odds" truly valuable is the portrait it paints of the child survivor of abuse. Such a child is not a helpless damaged creature fully dependent on caregivers and institutions for healing and recovery. Rather, he or she is a self-healer, who counts mainly on inner resources—belief in oneself, ability to withstand hardship and believe in the future, ethical principles, strength and humor—to survive even the most horrible experiences.

Family, friends, caregivers and shelters and institutions can provide the space and peace, time and guidance that child survivors need for healing and recovery. But those working with them need to recognize first of all the resilience they possess, to varied degrees, and endeavor to bring these out and develop them so that they can truly set out by themselves on the road to maturity. Respecting the child is the first step towards healing the child. And yes, there is indeed hope amid the awful reality of abuse.

Obit

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY



Bambi L. Harper

IT was one of those birthday parties, with a trio of musicians serenading the guests with now seldom-heard songs that were so popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Then you could drop by Guernica's or Tia Maria on M.H. del Pilar and there were those guitarists singing "Jurame" (the song opens with the words "Swear to me (*Jurame*) that even if much time passes (*que aunque pase mucho tiempo)* you won't forget the moment I met you (*no olvidaras el momento en que yo te conoci*)." At this point during the party, everyone in the table was singing along when it occurred to me that not only didn't you hear those songs anymore, we may well have been the last, with balding and gray hair, of the so-called "Coño kids" and a dying generation to know the words and their meaning.

Some of us may have sent our children to Spain to learn the language, but these weren't Spanish songs, they're Latin American. Since most of us had shipped them to the States for our children, these songs were totally alien whether they knew the language or not. They didn't grow up with grandparents who played 75 rpm records of "La Paloma" (for years, I thought it was a local song) or "La Violetera." Nor did they know parties where the old and the young danced the *paso doble* (without DJ's, thank you) or rumbas or that all time seduction dance, the slow drag. Their culture was no longer ours entirely.

But it went deeper than that. The Elizaldes no longer own Yco nor the Sorianos Philippine Air Lines and San Miguel. Lepanto is longer Lednicky or Marinduque Mining Cabarrus. Of the top five banks, four are Chinese-owned as are the biggest malls. You could say only the Zobel de Ayalas are left.

Having grown up right after the war, there was still a hang-over of the pre-war days when fathers came home for lunch (there being barely any traffic) and meals consisted of soup, fish, meat and vegetables, topped by dessert and fruits and finished off with coffee. The cook walked to market daily to ensure the freshness of the fish and vegetables since freezers were the exception not the rule. Not that the Malate neighborhood was rich; it was a middle-class area and most of the houses were unprepossessing. Your neighbor could easily be your teacher in school and the doctor lived in the next corner. Neither did anyone stare if they heard people speaking in Spanish or English. It wasn't considered elitist then.

I took most of this world for granted. It didn't occur to me that we were presiding over the end of an era that traced its heritage to the 16th century, a historical fact that took me half a century to discover.

In the process of researching a book on the district of Sta. Cruz in Manila, the historical facts were that the suburbs of Binondo and Sta. Cruz were established to at first contain the Chinese population. Later, these Chinese intermarried with local women who were either pure Tagalas or already Spanish *mestizas* (the Sangleys were not allowed to bring their wives) creating another race: the *mestiza* Sangley. But whether half-European or half-Chinese, the culture of these people was European (think Rizal, Luna, Pardo de Tavera). The culture of the country right to about Liberation, and especially in the urban areas, was European. People were familiar with arias from operas (one of the friar commentators mentions how in the 19th century, bands played arias during religious processions); most Manileños and graduates of private schools spoke Spanish and definitely understood it as did the Chinese who owned the bazaars of Carriedo and Ongpin. Chances were your household help was quadrilingual, speaking not just English, Spanish and Tagalog but their dialect as well. American and Hollywood hadn't quite permeated the fabric of existence the way it would within 20 years.

Before the war, despite the American colonization, the juggernaut of American culture was still some years away since there was no television and movies were a treat that people, one imagines, went to on weekends. Aside from Gaiety on M.H. del Pilar, you would have had to take the tram or the car (most families only had one) to the Escolta (Lyric and Capitol) or to Avenida Rizal (Ideal, State and Avenue or to Times in Quiapo, designed by D. Luis Araneta). But it was a big deal and not the common thing it is now, with all the cinemas in the malls and the proliferation of pirated DVDs.

It is entirely possible that if the 100,000 Manileños had not been massacred during the Liberation of Manila, the culture might still have preserved some veneer of its European heritage. The young men who died were after all the ones who would have been leaders in society, politics and business.

It is said that the values of *delicadeza, palabra de honor* and *hiya* vanished together with that dead generation. These were replaced by the need to survive by any means possible. Within the next 20 years after the war, many of the Spanish or *mestizo* families emigrated to the States, Canada or Australia. (The next 20 years would see the emigration of professionals because by then it was obvious that unless you were born rich or came from a political family, your fortunes lay elsewhere.)

Don't get me wrong. I don't say with regret that the "race" of European Sangley *mestizos* is extinct or that the culture has changed. I strongly believe that nothing happens by accident and that there are no coincidences. There is a reason for everything and if we learn our lessons we should come out ahead. Besides who is to say that the final result would not be the best in this best of all possible worlds?

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Underground roots

YOUNG BLOOD

Paolo L. Guiñabo

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

ONE thing my high school and college friends did not know was that my parents were revolutionaries who had gone underground. Both of them, especially my father, were actively involved in the movement during martial law. Mama was an activist, while Papa was a high-ranking officer of the New People's Army. He used to be the commanding officer of the Visayas and later became a member of the General Command overseeing the NPA's national operations.

When I was growing up, I had the chance to join my Papa and his *kaupod* (comrades) as they plotted to neutralize the injustices perpetrated by the Marcos government. I spent some of my childhood days in the mountainous places of Kabankalan, Negros Occidental. While children my age were playing on school playgrounds, I was out there with Papa, wandering around the guerilla fronts in Negros (actually the war zones) during the 1980s.

As a kid, I loved to play with Matchbox cars, Tonka trucks, G.I. Joe action figures and toy guns. But unlike others kids, aside from just playing with toy guns, I also got to see and handle the real stuff. I used to memorize the type of guns my Papa and his comrades carried. But, what seemed to me like a game children play was later explained to me as a struggle for something meaningful: a struggle against a dictator, a struggle for democracy.

Both my Mama and Papa made me understand the significance of the revolutionary struggle they were engaged in. Mama would painstakingly explain to me why Papa had to be always away from home: he was fighting for the country's freedom from a tyrannical rule. In that situation, she said, we could not live normally like other people do.

At a very young age, I had the chance to walk and talk with people of great intellect and admirable courage. But that was 20 years ago, when I was four years old.

Due to security reasons, my family relocated to Manila when I was 10. My brother and I were enrolled at one of the big schools along the University Belt. I was in Grade VI, my brother in Grade II. Regularly going to school and playing games being played by all the other kids in school and our neighborhood, I felt that my life was normal.

But that was until Sept. 8, 1992, when Papa was supposed to fetch my brother and me from school at 3:40 in the afternoon. That time, he didn't show up. Which was very unusual since he was always on time. We waited, since that was all we could do, because we were given no money for *baon*. Papa had to pick us up so we could go home.

We waited. And waited. And waited. At six o'clock, Mama called the school guards to check if we were still in school. Yes, the guard said, still waiting for *sundo*.

Another hour passed before a burly, middle-aged man who had been sitting all the time at our school's waiting area, approached us to ask why we were still in school. It was my brother who replied, "*Kasi wala pa po ang sundo namin at wala po kaming pera para makauwi* (Our Papa has not arrived to fetch us and we have no money to get home)."

He gave us money and advised us to take care as we boarded a jeepney. Later we learned that agents of the Intelligence Service Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) arrested Papa while he was on his way to fetch us. (I suspect that the man who gave us the money for fare was one of them.)

Mama was furious when we got home. Papa called moments after we arrived, but Mama hung up on him before he could explain.

Hours later, Papa arrived with a fruit basket, dinner and two companions who were total strangers to us. Mama was still mad. But when Papa introduced his companions as his military escorts, she suddenly calmed down. She told us to go to our room.

They had finished talking when we were allowed to go out of our room. As Papa and his guards were leaving, my youngest brother, who was only four years old then, asked the two men, "*Dadalhin nyo po ba ulit ang Papa ko?* (Are you going to take my Papa with you again?)."

Two days later, Papa's arrest was in the news. We had a daily news reporting activity in our Araling Panlipunan class. During the flag ceremony, a classmate informed me that they would be reporting about the arrest of a man who had the same surname as mine. I figured that it was about Papa's arrest.

I was feeling uneasy and uncomfortable the entire morning. I was not ashamed to admit to everyone that Papa was an NPA commander. But I was worried that my classmates would be able to understand the significance of the struggle Papa and his comrades were waging. If they could not understand it, they would think badly of him.

As my classmates prepared their news report, I was preparing answers to questions that they might ask me. When the report started, everyone listened attentively, their curiosity aroused by the fact that a man with the same surname as mine was in the news. When report was over, one classmate blurted out: "*Military ang tatay mo?*"

I could only nod and smile. They did not understand the news after all and had mistaken Papa as the captor and not the captive. Days later, I told only my closest friends the real story.

That was then. Today, my work has brought me back to places where I had been before, finding myself working with some of the people whom I had met in the underground movement. In the places I visit because of my work, I constantly meet people who know me but are total strangers to me. They would usually tell me that they were Papa's *kaupod* before.

However, my work now is vastly different from my parent's work before, although we share a common vision: the upliftment of the lives of the majority of Filipinos who are marginalized because of unjust social structures. They pinned their hope of attaining this vision on an armed struggle. I pin my hopes on the struggle to create a viable and socially-just economic system by persuading the people to adopt sustainable agricultural technologies and fight for a fairer trading system.

In Negros I was born and to Negros I have come back. Piece by piece I am re-discovering my underground roots as I work with the impoverished farmers and sugar workers of my homeland. Just like Papa and Mama, I also would like to involve myself in something that could make a difference in the lives of the people, even if what I am doing now is not as grand and daring as what they used to do.

Paolo L. Guiñabo, 24, is a Mass Communications graduate of San Sebastian College-Recoletos Manila. He works with the corporate communications unit of Alter Trade Corp. in Bacolod.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

Pride in Filipino culture

IN THIS unexpected season of disasters and gloom, the INQUIRER photo of star lanterns hanging in the Seattle Cathedral (PDI, 12/19/04) was uplifting to the spirit.

Despite the heavy presence of Filipinos in the United States, our culture is little known and appreciated there—and for that matter in other countries, too. Compared to our Asian neighbors, we are an invisible country. This is not because our culture is not distinctive. It is.

Unwittingly, though, some countrymen "misinterpret" our culture before others. This is my observation as an admirer of Filipino heritage. One tendency is to conclude that whatever has a Spanish name must be of Spanish or Mexican origin; therefore, it is not original Filipino.

Our authors thus claim that the dawn Mass called "*Misa de Gallo*" (Rooster's Mass) and the paper "*parol*" are of Mexican origin. In Spain and Spanish America *Misa de Gallo* refers to the midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, not to dawn Masses. The *novena* of dawn Masses with their star lanterns is unique to us Filipinos. While Mexicans do decorate with paper, my Mexican friends say it is they who got this from us via the Galleon Trade, and not us from them.

Another tendency is to paint all Spanish influence as evil, as in Intramuros' "Museum of Horrors."

There is also common misconception that the *barong Tagalog* is an offshoot of a Spanish decree ordering the "*Indios*" to wear their shirt tails out. I have done research on the topic and have not found any such decree. During the Apec meeting at Subic years back, world leaders were photographed wearing the *barong*. We should have been proud of this, but the main English daily of Thailand sniped that "they were wearing a slave shirt." Its source? Our own misinformed Filipino authors.

We are thus somewhat timid about projecting our cultural achievements. Would that our authors do more research before misinterpreting our customs. Would that more of our *kababayans* abroad proudly don their barong Tagalog and hoist the *parol* in joy and with pride.

—FERNANDO N. ZIALCITA,
Cultural Heritage Studies Program,
Ateneo de Manila University,
Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Sacrilegious

SUSAN Roces revealed her sentiments against her late husband's political opponents and the TV network she presumed had done them grave injustice. While every person has the right to free expression, Roces' harsh words and threats were enough to show her true character, her vindictiveness. It also showed her lack of appreciation of the harsh realities one must face when venturing ill-prepared into the dirty world of politics must face.

Fernando Poe Jr. did great for the movie industry, there's no doubt about this. And those who benefited from his benevolence obviously only have praises for him.

But where this idolatry will bring us is a cause for concern. FPJ is even ludicrously compared to Ninoy Aquino who chose incarceration rather than yield to Marcos dictatorship and, in the end, offered the ultimate sacrifice for the Filipinos.

FPJ lived a good life most of us would never have a taste of. He was blessed and did not go through the struggles of Ninoy. To compare FPJ, a "hero on reel" only, to the great hero would be sacrilegious.

—JOEMEL BRAVO
PO Box 1178, Dubai, UAE

Responsible mining

I AM a metallurgist, meaning, I extract metals from ores; and I work for a mining company. I just find it quite hypocritical for those raising the chalice (a product of mining) to be criticizing the mining industry. Why don't they call for a boycott of all mining products and see what happens? Church collections will be in wooden coins; their chalices will be made of plastic. And how do they think would a bell made of wood sound? Where would they place the incense they burn or the candles they light? Oh, I would love to see priests riding horses instead of motorcycles or cars. Criticizing mining is simply irresponsible. What they should do as servants of God is preach responsible mining.

—LARRY HALILI
Tagum City, Davao del Norte
hilariohalili@yahoo.com

Thinking 'small'

THE NEWS, "RP prone to tsunamis, says Philvocs," (PDI, 12/28/2004) is disgusting, to say the least. The source of the news ought to be censured by his superiors for coming out with a press statement that may have caused considerable damage to our weak economy, particularly, our bleak tourism industry. Philvocs and other government agencies ought to appoint responsible public information officers with enough sense to weigh the implications of their public statements before releasing them to the media.

In every natural calamity, there are hidden messages. The country's Boracay, El Nido, Dakak and other first-class resorts certainly qualify as alternative tourist destinations for European, American and other tourists wanting to come to this part of the globe. Boracay, in particular, is geographically safe from tsunamis. Why bash our heads with an irresponsible article?

Secondly, the report is not objective. If you read Enrico Mangao's statements, it is clear that not all of the Philippines is vulnerable to tsunamis, although there are indeed parts of the country that are prone to such phenomena. He identified three trenches that could possibly trigger destructive tsunamis, but these come once in a blue moon.

Several newspapers also carried news reports on the country's decision to send a "small" humanitarian team to the countries hit by the Dec. 26 catastrophe. I think, desk editors should do away with the word "small" for obvious reasons. What's important is that we are extending our help to those countries.

—NIEL ENRILE NARCA
nnarca@yahoo.com

True cost of Napocor's power

THE PAID advertisement from Consumer and Oil Price Watch chairman Raul T. Concepcion (PDI, 12/08/04)) thanking consumers for their "support & understanding" for his views on Napocor's debt and rate increase is presumptuous, misleading, misinformed.

The National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms does not support Concepcion's advocacy "for increase in the prices of basic services to reflect their true cost." It is obvious that Concepcion has neither the inclination nor the skills to challenge Napocor's self-serving and iniquitous claims that pad its Return on Rate Base (RoRB).

If he is really interested in coming up with the true cost of Napocor's electricity, Concepcion might want to look into the following:

First, according to the Commission On Audit, in the 2003 review of Napocor's accounts, an adjustment of some P740-billion affecting financial assets was made based on documents that do not have probative value. Also in that audit, about P1.49 trillion in undocumented, unexplained, unverified, unvalidated and/or unsupported loans, assets, expenditures, equipment, holdings, etc., was questioned.

May we remind Mr. Concepcion that true cost is based on prudent, reasonable and necessary costs or expenses for providing the service (electricity).

Second, "full transparency" should be invoked not only "to prevent a repetition of the sins of the past" but more importantly, to gain restitution and impose retribution for those "sins of the past." Why should we, the consumers and Napocor customers, pay for the mind-boggling losses of Napocor while its independent power producers, notably Mirant and its two subsidiaries, hog the top ten list of the country's most-profitable corporations, posting net incomes that just about match Napocor's net loss?

Third, does Mr. Concepcion support an increase in rate base that does not represent any real investment but is merely an accounting fiction that pads the profits of utilities, resulting in further over-recoveries from captive customers?

Mr. Concepcion toasts the "US$200-billion" debt absorption by the government, glossing over the fact that this amount will be collected from captive customers as the "universal charge" is passed on to everybody else in the form of taxes.

The unkindest cut is that while household consumers, like our Nasecore members, must settle our cost of power from our take-home pay, industries like Concepcion's tack power cost to production inputs, which eventually become pass-on cost paid for by consumers who buy Concepcion products.

—PETE ILAGAN, president
National Association of Electricity
Consumers for Reforms, Inc.
Unit 616 Roxas Seafront Gardens,
Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

Man's responsibility in an 'act of God'

INQUIRER'S editorial, "Act of God," (PDI, 12/29/04) trivializes the importance and effectiveness of an early warning system, something that could have saved thousands of lives. Couldn't a siren warning those on the beach to flee to higher grounds have helped?

Calling the tragedy an Act of God is tantamount to removing the responsibility to do all that can be done to protect people from natural calamities. No one is trying to assign blame here. But we must learn and act to be responsible to keep people protected and safe as much as can be done within our means.

—WYATT MULLIN
wyattm@shaw.ca

SSS is a puzzle

ON OCT. 14, 2004, the Social Security System tried to remove my name from the list of members of the SSS pension fund. In reaching this decision, SSS cited a legal opinion purportedly issued by its legal division as basis.

Because I disagreed with this decision, I wasted no time in returning my refund check. Since I also intended to file a petition with the Social Security Commission challenging the decision of the SSS, I requested a copy of the legal opinion.

For two months, I have been requesting a copy of this legal opinion. For this, I have even requested the assistance of the Mamamayan Muna arm of the Civil Service Commission and the Presidential Action Center. Despite all this, the SSS has not acted on my request.

The SSS' indifference is a complete puzzle to me. Sometimes, I think that the SSS does not find my case urgent because it does not involve millions in SSS funds, some of which could be channeled into the pockets of decision-makers as fat commissions. Besides, the so-called legal opinion may just expose SSS' flawed reasoning ability. So why show its revealing contents to a member like me?

—LUDOVICO M. ALQUIZAR,
Abkasa Relocation Site,
Barangay Mandalagan,
Bacolod City

Medical practice for licensed doctors only

THIS is about INQUIRER's headline story "Erap surgery called off…US surgeon fails to get HK permit to operate." (PDI, 12/31/04) The refusal of Hong Kong to allow the American doctor to do surgery on President Estrada had nothing to do with professional jealousy. Any government has the right to regulate the practice of medicine within its area of jurisdiction,

For example, a Filipino physician who does not have a license to practice medicine in the United States will never be allowed to do so in that country no matter how brilliant he is. And he will be given the license only after he passes the required state board exam and complied with all other requirements.

These calls to mind an incident involving a Russian doctor many years ago. He was not licensed to practice medicine in the Philippines. But his promoters was "selling" his services to patients in Manila, touting him as a physician with a special treatment procedure for all kinds of ailments, including cardiovascular diseases.

Foreign doctors who are not licensed to practice medicine here should not be allowed to treat and operate on patients in the Philippines. I am calling the attention of, the Philippine Board of Medicine, the Professional Regulation Commission and the major medical associations, particularly the Philippine Medical Association, headed by Dr. Bu C. Castro, who is both a doctor and lawyer, as well as the Board of Medicine, to make a clear stand on this issue. As a licensed medical practitioner in the Philippines and a former governor of the PMA, I say that we should follow the example of the Hong Kong medical authorities.

—JESUS C. LAMMATAO, M.D.,
58 Manuel L. Quezon St.,
Taguig City

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INQBOX

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What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas and the New Year?

although I'm not wid my family dis Xmas, i hope dey celebrated Xmas full of joy & happiness. I hope for more blessings 4 my family. Ü
—derrick mones, *quezon city*

For my family to have a joyous, rich and prosperous life for the years to come, and most of all, peace.
—Godihard buenaflor, *iloilo city*

That we may look to the past, to gain appreciation for the present & perspective for the future! GO the EXTRA MILE and LENGHTEN your STRIDE!
—elmer Guevara, *urdaneta city*

I dream for all Filipino families to experience a politics and corruption-free, service-driven government.ü
—Joy Ann Saldaña, *Parañaque*

good health, united always in whatever problems we will have & to live our life as true christians.
—cynthia a. Valdez, *la union*

To experience heaven while still on earth. Not a lot of people realize that it can be done.
—EJ Delos Reyes, *Quezon*

I just want my family to stay healthy and have faith with God always, even though they lack material things the most.
—evelyn kwong, *makati city*

may we realize dat it is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy each other—THAT MAKES HAPPINESS! may we always build a door so der will be somewhere 4 opportunity 2 knock, since today is a gift.

bagong taon,
bagong pag-asa!

—elmer Guevara, *urdaneta city*

peace in d country, good health of my family, and successful career.
—Levi Macaraeg, *Aguilar, Pangasinan*

i want my family 2 have happiness and peaCe of mind all througHouT.
—maria ilsea Salvador, *davao city*

i hope for more zest for life for my mom so she can enjoy more her retirement in the company of new and old friends
—herminia pascua, *bangar, La Union*

Be happy, not sad & GOOD HEALTH to my family :-) I love u all.
—Ralph Solomon B. Erediano, *davao city*

good health, safety, financial stability, less problems, more luck
—joyrenn patio, *san Fernando, pampanga*

That my family will continue receiving good graces from God and be able to support the needy. Ü
—Christian Cabredo, *Parañaque City*

like with the pRevious year, better health, more love, fine job for my father here in Philippines and our own house.Ü
—gem tapar, *valenzuela*

my wish is dat the Philippine ecOnOmy will be better so dat average families will have brighter days 2 look forward to.
—Jo Anne Dayan, *Tarlac City*

peace and good health 2 my family. Happy New Year!
—gay tupas, *digos city*

my dream for my family is greater bonding, new house!
—aina saludo, *los baños*

longer, healthy and peaceful life for my parents.
—rommel, *marikina*

I hope 4 enough blessings of God, especially d house i dream to dedicate 4 my parents
—Antonio Taguinod, *Antipolo City*

my hopes & dreams this Xmas & New Year is good health & for us to be always together.
—miriam morales, *batangas city*

I hope 4 better understanding & communication among my siblings to maintain our good relationship.
—maricris florendo, *vigan city*

i hope and dream that my family will always stay healthy and myself to be always gainfully employed in order to support them.
—nilo jaspe, *marikina city*

Even in these hard times, i hope and pray dat love abounds in all of us throughout d year. The family must come first.
—Archie C. ABACHE, *Legazpi city*

my hopes and dreams for my family: peace and good health and love for each other.
—mary grace magalso, *bacoor, cavite*

i hope that 2005 will be a fruitful year for my family. Good health, happiness for all of us & a brand new car Ü HAPPY NEW YEAR!
—Fatimah, *batangas*

hopes & dreams 4 my family dis Xmas & New Year are dat we grow closer 2 God & have good health & financial stability.
—michelle fabellar, *Los Baños, Laguna*

a decent salary to build a decent house, and enough food to eat.
—andy nalzaro, *tagbilaran city*

good health, enough blessings, a family strong, intact and united, a happy family, protected and guided by the Almighty.
—emil f. miranda, *mandaluyong*

endless faith to enable us to hope and dream for a better tomorrow… Faith is important in these trying times.
—Raul G. Sarmiento, *City of San Fernando*

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Frat brods raised funds for Sulu doc's release

By Julie Alipala and Aquiles Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Fraternity brothers of Sulu government physician Alverio Canda handed over at least P1 million to an Abu Sayyaf faction to secure his release.

(Canda is a doctor from Parang, Sulu, not Parang, Maguindanao as reported by the headline of an earlier story.)

Alpha Sigma Phi national herald Julmunir Jannaral, said the money "for board and lodging," was given to a commander Albader Parad last month.

Earlier, the military said soldiers rescued Canda from his abductors.

Southern Command Chief Lt. General Alberto Braganza said Canda was rescued near Barangay Tando Patong in Maimbung Sulu.

Canda was abducted in November inside the health center in Parang town, where he was assigned.

"We don't question the version of the military surrounding the circumstances of our brother's release, but everybody in Sulu knows that we worked hard for Canda's freedom," Jannaral told the INQUIRER.

He said after the payoff, Canda was released in Indanan town.

Wilfredo Osabel, Alpha Sigma Phi national president, said they decided to start a fund raising campaign for Canda's freedom because of fears he would be harmed.

"We believe in (the) no-ransom policy of the government, but we need to raise some amount for board and lodging because our concern is the safety of our members," he said.

Not ransom?

Engineer Servulo Dominise, Alpha Sigma Phi executive director, declined to call the payoff ransom payment.

"We did not pay ransom, we just gave some amount for board and lodging," he said.

The fraternity officials said they asked the military and the police to allow them to negotiate with the kidnappers.

They said because of the lull in the operation, they were able to contact the kidnappers and eventually succeeded in freeing the fraternity brother.

Senior Supt. Sukarno Ikbala, police director for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), told the INQUIRER that they were surprised upon learning that Canda was already freed.

"He was already out when we were about to launch rescue operations," Ikbala said.

In Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, about 2,000 families fled their homes because of fears of Abu Sayyaf bandits, according to Mayor Labualas Mamansual.

Mamansual said the harassment started on Dec. 13. He said Abu Sayyaf bandits shot and injured a certain Tanto Badrudin, a resident of Barangay Klobe.

The next day, the bandits allegedly attacked the house of Kutingan Bangon, a member of a police auxiliary force in Barangay Kabuling. A civilian, identified as Maturadja Matudato, was wounded during the shoot-out.

More attacks

Mamansual said on Dec. 23, the bandits harassed residents of Barangay Kraan by firing rocket-propelled grenades and M-79 explosive projectiles.

Two members of the Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) were reportedly killed in the attack.

On Dec. 26, Mamansual said Abu Sayyaf bandits and their local allies from the Abu Sofia gang attacked a police outpost in Barangay Malisbong. No one was reported injured.

Mamansual said the Abu Sayyaf was on a rampage because of the continued military operation against its members in Sultan Kudarat.

He said he already asked Sultan Kudarat Gov. Pakung Mangudadatu to request the military to send more soldiers to the towns being harassed by the Abu Sayyaf, a terror group with links to the Al Qaida international network of terrorists.

UNIDENTIFIED member of a gun-for-hire gang shows how he maintains an assault rifle.
PDI FILE PHOTO

Intel chief faces Abra 'gun culture'

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—It's now time to bring in the experts.

Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza, newly appointed Cordillera police director and former intelligence chief of the Philippine National Police, said sociologists and anthropologists would be tapped to design police response to the gun culture in the Cordillera.

This culture has given birth to private armies in Abra, tribal wars in Kalinga and the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA).

Versoza said many of the problems that police have yet to solve may be culture-bound.

Among the cases Versoza said he is interested in is the unsolved murder of reporter Stephen Omaois, 23, who was found dead near a school in Tabuk town in Kalinga last month.

Versoza said he had to confront a tribal feud between several Kalinga villages.

He said these feuds could be solved through peace pacts or tribal agreements.

Versoza, a former Baguio police director, said police must acknowledge indigenous justice systems even if it meant agreeing to settlements that would not be honored by the courts.

Police will need to consult anthropologists who are knowledgeable in indigenous bureaucracies as well as sociologists who can translate these into judicial systems, he said.

"This is important . . . (because) we know that Cordillera people are very clannish, and this (protective stance) can explain why (many families) own guns," he said.

He said the experts could also be asked to study the Abra situation.

The INQUIRER ran a series in September last year that exposed Abra's private armies and their influence in that province's politics.

Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Versoza's predecessor, convinced Abra Gov. Vicente Valera and 26 Abra mayors to remove their bodyguards in exchange for police security.

But Albano failed to generate enough evidence to detain or arrest members of private armed groups, Versoza said.

"Due process is essential to stop the private armies completely," he said.

Another Negros sugarcane plantation hit by blaze

BACOLOD CITY—Fire razed 13 hectares of sugarcane plantation in Isabela town, Negros Occidental on New Year's Eve, the police said on Sunday.

This brought to 59 hectares the total area of sugarcane plantations that had been hit by a series of fires last month not only in Isabela but also in the towns of Moises Padilla, Isabela, Manapla and E.B. Magalona.

Supt. Mark Edison Belarma, acting Negros Occidental police chief, said the latest incident happened on Dec. 31 at Hacienda Felisa, Barangay Libas, Isabela, about 82 km southeast of this city.

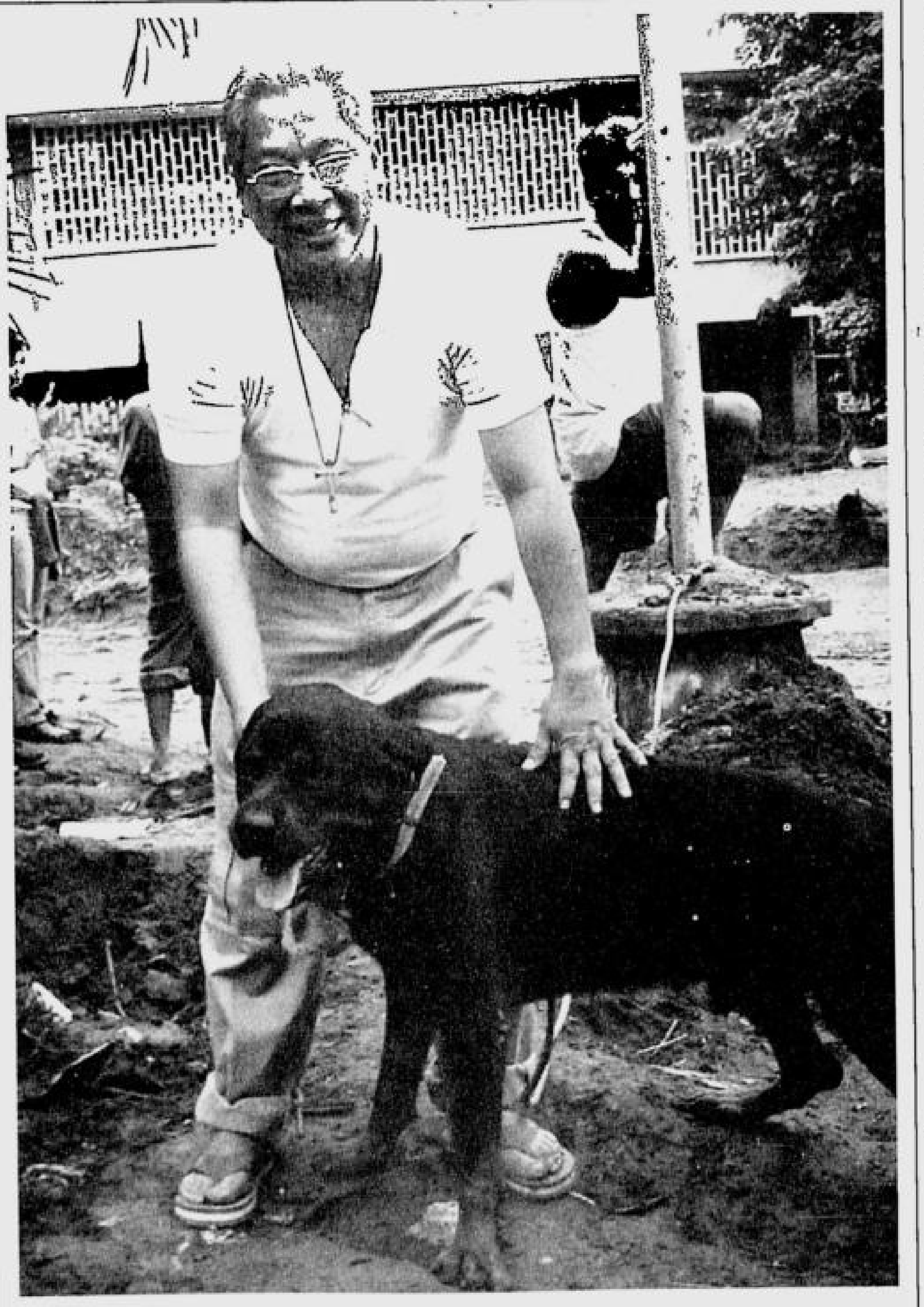
Belarma said the estimated damage on the sugarcane farm of Noni Lovina was placed at P650,000.

Police investigators in Isabela could not determine yet if the burning was intentionally done although investigations showed that most of the fires that hit other sugarcane plantations were believed to be the work of arsonists.

Police, however, are at a loss who were behind the arson.

One of the possible angles the police were looking into was that disgruntled sugarcane workers might be behind the series of fires.

Police were not also discounting the possibility that communist rebels might be involved and the sugarcane plantations were burned due to the failure of sugar planters to pay revolutionary taxes to the rebel movement. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*



LIFE SAVER MA. CERES DOYO
Champ, the four-year-old Rottweiler owned by Infanta Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona, saved the life of the bishop's sacristan, Dennis, by getting him out of his quarters and guiding and swimming with him through floods at the height of typhoons that devastated Infanta. The bishop's bamboo house was a few meters from a giant timber that rolled down the mountains during the recent landslide disaster that destroyed thousands of homes and killed hundreds of people. Champ poses with his proud bishop and owner.

Radioman can't get justice 4 years after slay

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Justice remains elusive for Emily Ureta, four years after her husband, Aklan broadcaster Rolando Ureta, was gunned down.

Emily has asked the help of the justice department yesterday in solving the case of her husband who was shot dead on Jan. 3, 2001.

She said she needs the help of lawyers who are willing to pursue the case against the suspected killers of her husband. She also urged her husband's colleagues to help her pursue his case.

"My hope of finding justice grows dim as the case takes longer," Emily, who has a six-year-old son, told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

The Aklan Provincial Police Office last year filed a murder complaint against Jessie Ticar, Amador Raz and two unidentified suspects for the killing of Rolando but the complaint was dismissed by the Aklan provincial prosecutors' office last month due to lack of probable cause.

In the resolution dismissing the complaint, the prosecutors' office debunked the testimony of the lone witness who claimed that he was near the place where he saw Ticar and Raz shoot the victim.

The testimony of the witness was contradicted by his father Perlito Sonio and uncle Diego Masangya, who executed separate affidavits that the witness was in Iloilo City at the time of the killing.

The police and Emily yesterday filed a motion, appealing the dismissal of the complaint.

They submitted affidavits of additional witnesses, supporting the testimony of the first witness.

Supt. Odelardo Magayanes, acting Aklan police director, said Sonio and Masangya could have been "pressured" to testify against the witness.

Magayanes said it was Sonio who convinced his son to surface and report what he saw to the police. Before he testified against his son, Sonio allegedly asked for firearms but was refused by the police, said Magayanes.

Ureta was gunned down along the national highway in Barangay Bagtu, Lezo town, Aklan, around 7 km west of the capital town of Kalibo.

Baguio officials likely to close market due to meningo

By Vincent Cabreza and Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Two more deaths from meningococcemia, a fatal strain of meningitis, during the New Year prompted the Baguio government to consider shutting down the city market for 10 days.

Government doctors said most of the cases of those who died were traced to the market area. These included a two-year-old girl who died on Dec. 31 and a 34-year-old engineer who died on Jan. 2.

Earlier, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit identified the public market as most vulnerable to meningococcemia contamination.

Because of this, local officials want to decongest the market immediately to reduce possible contamination, Benedicto Alhambra, acting city administrator, said.

Government doctors told city officials on Saturday that eight of 18 meningococcemia cases recorded between Dec. 20 and 31 had died.

The DOH documented 42 suspected meningococcemia cases between March and December last year in the Cordillera. Twenty of these patients, including 11 children, have died.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ended her week-long vacation here on Jan. 1, shortly after the child's death was officially confirmed. Throughout her holiday stay in the city, Ms Arroyo never discussed meningococcemia.

"The quickest way to (neutralize meningococcemia) is to shut (the Baguio City public market) down for 10 days, so we can scrub, clean and remove what should be removed so we can have a clean market," Alhambra told the INQUIRER.

Alhambra said the shutdown would require the government to put up temporary satellite markets to relocate licensed vendors who would be displaced.

More than 17,000 vendors and 4,000 public utility jeepney drivers have been receiving antibiotic dosages from the government since November, to help strengthen their immunity from the disease, he said.

Pablito Gumnad, a board member of the Baguio Market Vendors Association (Bamarva), cautioned the government against taking "such extreme measure" until doctors could establish how the disease spread in the city.

"Sales in the market have slowed down, but this is not just because of (meningococcemia). The economy is slow. Tourism is down. Taxes are so high people are saving their money instead," Gumnad said.

"But there is no panic here. Vendors have been alerted to the disease (since November), and we have been cooperating with the government. They should, however, assure us that all it (shutdown) would take is 10 days because our livelihood would be affected," he said.

On Monday, some vendors here were observed wearing surgical masks. "The doctors who approached us suggested we should show people we are health conscious," a vegetable vendor said.

Health concerns have universal appeal and the city government expects everyone to cooperate, Alhambra said.

"Health may even be the key for the government to set everything in this city right. We did a preliminary survey of downtown Baguio's most congested areas (from the city market to some of its nightspots), and we have to admit, Baguio has become very dirty," he said.

Mayor Braulio Yaranon has activated a medical crisis control center for meningococcemia and other diseases, which will try to restore order to the city market.

The center will reinstate zoning guidelines and reduce the number of vendors allowed to sell their wares in the market and on the city's sidewalks.

Nightmares continue to haunt survivors of tsunamis

BEYOND the massive toll in human life, tsunamis which tore apart Indian Ocean coastlines are set to pose a global mental health catastrophe as thousands of people live haunted by the sudden, ferocious wall of water.

From tourists whose holidays turned apocalyptic to survivors gnawed by guilt, to many outsiders whose only connection to the horror was watching its aftermath on television, the scale of the tsunamis has few modern comparisons.

"We are worried that people are going to need psychological counseling. These communities just don't know how to do that," said Harsaran Pandey, spokesperson for the World Health Organization in South Asia.

Psychologists say survivors often suffer vivid flashbacks, with the mere sound of a wave or emergency siren enough to make them relive the nightmare.

A boy's nightmares

Mohamad Fikri Rahim, 11, was in Malaysia's Penang Island when he was caught by violent waves.

He cries in his sleep and shouts, "No, no!" his mother Rahibah Osman said.

"I don't know what he's talking about, but when I ask him, he starts to cry," she said.

Others suffer more silently, feeling a need to cling to loved ones or re-assess their priorities after realizing how fragile life can be.

In badly hit Car Nicobar island, injured Indian Air Force Flight Lt. S. Srinivasa said the killer waves "have completely changed our outlook."

Earth's mysterious ways

"We nitpicked about safety, rules and textbook procedures," he said. "But now we are more stoic because dear Earth has its own mysterious ways which are beyond our control."

Australian psychiatry professor Sandy McFarlane said the disaster would stay with victims in some form or another for the rest of their lives.

"They are haunted with images and memories of what's happened and in a sense they become trapped in a sort of time warp by these experiences and find it difficult to move on from them."

A world once beautiful

Clinical psychologist Yeung Lai-ying said the tsunami would affect survivors no matter what their age or background.

"Human beings have assumptions about the world. Most of them think the world is good and meaningful. But disasters break their assumptive world, make them feel helpless," Yeung said.

When family members have been killed in a natural disaster, survivors often have an overwhelming sense they should have done more, said Clivia Langer, head of the emergency psychology group of the German association of psychologists.

Nightmares about death

The trauma can eventually lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, whose first symptoms are shock and numbness and a feeling of unreality, Malaysian psychiatrist Lim Chee Min said.

After that come fear and anxiety—panic attacks or nightmares about death and dying.

The disorder can be triggered by anything that reminds a person of the tsunami—water or being near the beach.

Austrian tourist Jasmin Hasic and his wife Nadja survived the tsunamis that struck Phuket but the images played over and over in his mind.

He is in a bungalow on a Thai beach with Nadja. A wave crashes over them. He holds out his hand, but she's pulled out to sea. He calls out her name. She doesn't respond.

"This is in my head ... Every day, every day," Hasic said.

The memories make him cry.

Fear of water

Some parents are in denial, believing their missing children survived and are living in the mountains.

There are survivors who can't force themselves to leave the area because they feel guilty they're alive, said Jason Young, a British psychotherapist.

Others are afraid of the dark, the water, or being alone.

One of those who has already sought treatment in Thailand is Swede Torbjorn Kalm. His youngest child, Saga, a 3-year-old girl with blond pigtails, is still missing.

Kalm can't sleep and he had a vision of Saga.

Many overcome grief

"Suddenly, it was like she was running to me," he said, crying outside a town in Phuket, where he was posting flyers with her picture.

Studies of earthquakes, fires, hurricanes and other disasters find that a majority of survivors eventually learn to work through their grief.

"At this point we have to be very careful not to label as a mental health problem this natural psychological response to being displaced in a split second, to seeing that everything you had now no longer exists," said Dr. Rachel Yehuda, director of the traumatic stress program at the US Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Those who are deeply scarred emotionally will need long-term care, she said.

Lesson from the waves

The risk that prolonged grief can cause depression is greater still when the death of a loved one is not confirmed, or the body is swept into a mass grave without being identified.

Maggie Cheng, a primary school teacher in Hong Kong, said the killer waves had shown her that "life is so fragile."

"Only one disaster can kill so many lives. You don't have complete control of your life," she said. "This has made me treasure what I have, my life, my friends and family," she said.

"But we've also learned something positive in this. Everyone from all over the world is trying to help these victims. I want them to know that we should care for one another." *AFP, AP, New York Times*

GMA, bishops set days of mourning

From page A1

labor official helping families locate dead, injured or missing relatives in Thailand.

Travel advisory

Cruz said Lomadilla's sister had planned to travel to Phuket to look for the remains but heard that a Thai family admitted it had mistakenly claimed the body of a woman that had been brought from Phuket to Bangkok. She checked and found on Sunday that the body was her sister's, Cruz said.

Cruz said the family planned to cremate the remains in Thailand.

The government advised Filipinos to defer travel to countries hit by the tsunamis, citing health reasons.

"As of now we will advise Filipinos not to proceed to those areas due to health reasons," Agence France-Presse quoted Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asuque as saying.

Jakarta trip defended

Ms Arroyo said the Philippines was sending medical and forensic teams not only to Thailand but also to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, and no financial assistance because of its own rehabilitation work in typhoon-ravaged Quezon and Aurora provinces.

"The holding of a tsunami summit in Jakarta is urgent and significant not only to step up the international humanitarian response to the multi-nation disaster, but also to enhance regional disaster-preparedness through a consolidated information sharing and early warning system," Ms Arroyo said in a press conference.

"Our own forecasting modernization plans must be aligned with the regional effort under the theme of all for one and one for all," she added.

"Disaster mitigation must now be everyone's and every nation's business. Once more, each nation must act locally but think globally," she said.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said the Asean leaders would also discuss the establishment of a "Regional Tsunami Warning System" proposed to be set up in the Northwest Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions.

Ms Arroyo justified her decision to attend the Jakarta summit while the government was still busy rebuilding Quezon and Aurora.

Major policy speech

" ... If you look at the column of (INQUIRER columnist Amando) Doronila, he's been saying I'm not being sensitive enough (to the tsunami victims). Really, we have to be very sensitive to what's happening in the world, especially because when it happened to us—and what happened to us is less than one percent of what's happened to other countries—they all sent help," she said.

"So we owe it to them, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because it is incumbent upon us to reciprocate to the extent of our ability," Ms Arroyo said.

She said the five Asean founding members had always moved together when confronting major problems.

"They're all going. Wouldn't it be funny if I didn't go, especially as they all helped us during our own calamity?" she said.

Ms Arroyo said that after the traditional New Year *vin d'honneur* (diplomatic reception) on Friday, she would invite evangelical groups to pray for the tsunami victims.

She will also deliver a major policy speech on the same day.

Stepped-up search

CBCP president Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla said that Jan. 9, the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, would be a good time to pray for the Asian tsunami victims, almost a third of whom were children.

"We appeal to all Filipinos to pray for the souls of those who perished and also for those surviving families. We also pray for their respective governments, other countries, as well as international bodies who are at present offering assistance," Capalla said.

Officials said a Philippine team now in Thailand was stepping up its search for at least 13 missing Filipinos in view of a possible move by Thai authorities to hold a mass burial for thousands of decomposing bodies to avert an outbreak of diseases.

The DFA previously said there were 22 Filipinos missing but revised the list after some were accounted for.

"The Secretary (Romulo) has said that the department and the Philippine Embassy will put in high gear the efforts in accounting for all Filipinos affected by the tsunami," Asuque said.

Dario Banua Maniago, Michelle Faustino Noel and Josephine Ragual, who were earlier listed as missing, have been accounted for as safe, officials said.

Jennifer Liew May Lin Reyes and her daughter Cassandra were stricken off the missing list after it was established that they were Singaporeans. *With reports from Blanche S. Rivera and TJ Burgonio*

Tsunami scare grips Tawi-Tawi

THOUSANDS of civilians in the island-municipalities of Tawi-Tawi fled to higher ground on Sunday evening following text messages that killer waves would swamp the province.

Fearing tsunamis which killed possibly up to 150,000 people in Asia and Africa last week, residents sought refuge in the mountains of Bongao and Panglima Sugala towns, said Fr. Jonathan Domingo, OMI, executive director of the Sulu-Tawi-Tawi Broadcasting Foundation.

Women, with children in tow, sought refuge in mosques and churches while other residents rushed to the town halls.

"These were false reports that disturbed the people of Bongao and Panglima Sugala," Domingo told radio dxMS. "We had a hard time convincing them that the reports were not true."

The same messages claimed that some fish farmers had died and urged residents of coastal areas to evacuate.

Babylyn Kano Omar, station manager of dxGD in Bongao, said she immediately called relatives in Sugala Panglima to verify the report. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Tsunamis spare mosques, statue of Virgin Mary

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—In Indonesia's tsunami wastelands on the northern tip of Sumatra Island, little remains of whole towns lost to the colossal forces that came thundering in from the ocean.

But across these battered shores, dozens of mosques still stand, their minarets glinting defiantly in the sun—a phenomenon survivors in the deeply Islamic region credit as much to divine intervention as robust architecture.

In the Sri Lankan town of Matara, around 100 Catholics celebrated the return of a statue of the Virgin Mary that disappeared during the tsunami, only to be found days later unscathed.

They held Mass at the Our Lady of Matara Shrine, where some 200,000 Sri Lankan pilgrims typically converge for a major feast in September each year.

"Everyone loves Our Lady of Matara," Fr. Charles Hewawasam said of the statue of Mary cradling the Infant Jesus.

The statue, found by Sri Lankan fishermen in 1907 and whose origins remain unknown, disappeared from its glass encasing when the first wave swept across the church grounds as people celebrated Mass on Boxing Day.

He said Matara's Catholic community of around 200 people, 18 of whom were killed and two are missing, believe the Virgin kept the sea at bay after the first wave for several minutes before a second struck.

This allowed them to clear away some dead bodies, collect injured people and then flee the scene, he said.

The statue was found a few days later near the backyard of a Buddhist resident who returned it to the church.

While the jewelry from the statue was taken by the sea, the Infant Jesus crown balanced on its head was still there.

While some spoke of "God's wrath," hundreds of Muslims in Indonesia turned to their mosques for shelter from the advancing tides.

Outside Banda Aceh, the sea swept away the Muslim village of Baet but left the mosque relatively intact.

"God's invisible hands prevent the mosque's destruction," said resident Mukhlis Khaeran. "He punishes us for our greed and arrogance but He will protect his house."

Mosques are an everyday sight in most of Indonesia, but especially in Aceh, one of Islam's main gateways into the world's largest Muslim-populated country.

Spiritual beliefs in Aceh and around the Indian Ocean were tested to the limit on Dec. 26 when towers of water crashed ashore, obliterating virtually everything in their path. *Inquirer wires*

Tsunami relief operation confronts chaos

From page A1

vivor camps in Indonesia's Aceh province. About two-thirds of the 144,000 people killed by the Dec. 26 tsunami died there.

Washed-out roads, broken bridges and widespread flooding meant swaths of Sri Lanka's eastern seaboard and Aceh's west coast remained inaccessible eight days after the tsunami hit.

Aid workers fear some isolated survivors may not be reached for weeks, despite a fleet of military helicopters dropping aid.

'Wall of devastation'

"The emergency teams are arriving to be blocked by a wall of devastation. Everything is destroyed," Aly-Khan Rajani, CARE Canada's program manager for Southeast Asia, said in Jakarta.

The tsunami relief operation has seen an outpouring of aid.

"The world is really coming together here in a way that we probably have never seen before," UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland said in New York.

Powell departed Washington for Asia Sunday, leading a US delegation which will survey the devastation from the tsunamis.

Jakarta talks

"I will be going to Thailand, initially Bangkok, then Phuket, where a lot of life was lost. And then down to Jakarta, Indonesia, then out to Aceh, which is the place where we have seen the greatest loss of life," Powell told NBC television shortly before his departure.

"I'll also be participating in an international conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, on the 6th of January with Kofi Annan and a number of other leaders. And then I also hope to be able to get to Sri Lanka on the way out."

Accompanying Powell on the trip is the brother of US President George W. Bush, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, who regularly is called upon to manage disaster relief efforts in his hurricane-prone home state.

Powell and Bush will get a firsthand look at the week-old recovery operation, amid concerns that badly needed relief supplies were not getting through because of logistical problems.

Top US newspapers urged Washington to do much more, saying the United States could improve its standing in the world and combat terrorism by offering far-reaching aid.

Military forces have swung into rescue mode, with ships, aircraft, and thousands of troops, especially medical specialists, deployed from the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Germany, India, Pakistan, China and Japan.

'Ugly Angels'

The arrival of a fleet of US warships headed by the carrier Abraham Lincoln has stepped up aid operations significantly in Aceh, with airdrops reaching survivors cut off by floods.

But hungry mobs have prevented some aid helicopters from landing, forcing them to drop supplies from the air.

Six Sea Stallion heavy transport helicopters and their 100 marines—a group nicknamed the "Ugly Angels"—were being airlifted to Aceh from a base in Hawaii to help move the hundreds of tons of aid pouring into Banda Aceh airport.

Devastated city

Australia was sending small Iroquois helicopters for landing in the worst-hit areas.

Singapore said a landing craft with 400 military personnel and heavy equipment had landed at Meulaboh, a city on the devastated west coast of Aceh where it is feared one third of the population, as many as 40,000 people, may have perished.

With much of the west coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island impassable by road, aid was being ferried up the coast to the port of Padang before heading by road to Medan and then Aceh.

"Boats are used to deliver relief goods, but pirates are a real concern off the west coast," the UN Joint Logistics Center said in a report on tsunami relief operations in Indonesia. *Reuters, AFP*

Brit admits hoax on victims

LONDON—A British man admitted on Monday to sending hoax e-mails to friends and relatives of people missing since the Asian tsunami.

Christopher Pierson pleaded guilty to sending more than 30 e-mails to worried relatives, saying their loved ones had been confirmed dead, after they posted their details on the website of TV station Sky News.

Pierson, 37, was to be detained until Jan. 24, an official at London's Horseferry Road Magistrates Court said.

He pleaded guilty to malicious communication and causing a public nuisance after police seized computer equipment at the weekend.

Pierson was accused of posing as a British official from the "Foreign Office Bureau" in Thailand in his e-mails. All the messages came from one bogus e-mail address, ukgovfoffice@aol.com. *Reuters*

A boy named Tsunami

From page A1

her abdomen and I told her it must be due to the fall as the baby was not due until Jan. 15. But as the pain got worse, I became frantic and started looking for help, and luckily found a nurse.

"A few hours later the child was born. But the nurse had no instruments, she was unable to remove the placenta from inside my wife's womb and within hours she was again in pain."

Roy trekked to Hut Bay and located a doctor who advised that she be taken to a hospital.

"It was the doctors who suggested we name the boy Tsunami and we also liked the name and decided to call him that. After all it is a name everyone will instantly notice and remember." *Reuters*

INQBOX
Win this "Inquirer T-shirt!
Question of the Week
The recent earthquake and tsunami that resulted in over 100,000 deaths and injuries to countless others make me feel that life is____________.
Senders of d first 10 texts publishd in Tuesday's INQBOX wiL each receiv an "Inquirer T-shirt!!☺
Key in: inquirer news name/city/message.
Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)
*Metro Manila winners can call Chay at 8978808 loc. 218. Provincial winners can text: inquirer ad name/city/mailing address to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them.

Pa gives up, charged with slay of two sons

By Luige A. del Puerto

WHEN he reached for the knife last Dec. 31, 27-year-old Jaime Fil meant to end it all—the lives of his children and his own.

Yesterday, Fil was formally charged with parricide after he admitted that he had stabbed to death his two young sons. He was sobbing inconsolably as he was taken out of the detention cell into a police car.

On that fateful day when he decided to put an end to his misery, Fil had left a note for his estranged live-in partner, Alpha Sanchez, 25.

In his "suicide" letter, Fil professed his undying love for her. He also blamed her for everything. But if she had only given him one more chance to patch up things up, he said "We would have started anew this New Year," he wrote her.

But too scared to end his own life, Fil fled after killing his two sons, John Michael Sanchez, 6, and Joshua, 5.

At 3 a.m. on Jan. 1, Amor de Leon, a grandaunt, discovered John Michael's body inside a refrigerator. Joshua was found on the second floor.

Fil had surrendered to the police on Sunday. A relative called Barangay Captain Rodrigo Asilo to tell him that Fil was in San Pedro, Laguna, and that he wanted to give up.

The barangay official fetched Fil from Laguna around 3 p.m. and brought him to the police station, according to PO3 Enrique Enriquez.

Admission

The policeman said Fil had verbally admitted killing his children to an uncle in Pasig City, to Barangay Chair Asilo and to the police.

"His uncle then called Amor de Leon's sister and told her there were dead persons in the house," Enriquez said. "Fil went to this uncle first after fleeing his home."

"We found one boy inside the refrigerator. Apparently, he tried to hide there. The suspect blocked the refrigerator with a chair so the boy could not get out," Enriquez added.

But Fil left his 4-year-old daughter unharmed, the investigator said.

At the police station, Alpha Sanchez said he left Fil because he beat her up.

Asked what could have prompted her partner to kill their sons, Sanchez said Fil often had jealous fits, leading her to leave him.

Sanchez's aunt Beth Minor said she had encouraged her niece to seek the help of police each time he hurt her but she never did.

"When she left them last Dec. 3, Alpha wanted to give him a lesson. I don't think she was really going to leave them for good," Minor said.

JAIME Fil cries as he relates to mediamen Monday the circumstances behind the death of his two sons.

JOAN BONDOC

It was a tragic end to a romance that spanned almost a decade.

In their teens when they decided to live together, the couple later had five children.

Yesterday, as she sat silently in one corner of the investigation room, Sanchez looked too young to be confronted with such a tragedy.

No show

The police said the two separated on Dec. 3. Sanchez went to her aunt in Cardona, Rizal.

They talked on Dec. 25, and Alpha said she was coming back on Dec. 31. He waited for her but she never got home.

PO3 Enriquez said the children were stabbed between 9 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

That evening, a neighbor said a few men who were drinking across Fil's two-story home called out to greet him. "He did not answer back," the neighbor said.

In his "suicide note," Fil said he wanted their theme song, "Ako'y Sayo, Ika'y sa Akin Lamang," to be played on the day of his burial. "I'll always guard you. I will scare away your suitors, and you, too. I'll pull your leg," he wrote. "Alpha, you are all I want forever. Happy anniversary this Jan. 5, 2005. Sorry I have no gift for you... I love you very, very much," he said.

To those who would be in charge of his wake, Fil said: "Don't bury me until Alpha has arrived. I want my wake to last two weeks."

Soon, police help just a text message away

By Leila B. Salaverria

SOON, police assistance in Manila would be just a text message away.

This developed after the Western Police District and Smart Communications, Inc. tied up for a text hotline project that aims to ensure the quick response of Manila policemen to any crime incident or community problem.

The project is expected to be formally launched soon, since it is in its final phase and the WPD is just waiting for the go-signal from Smart.

"With this system, the WPD will be more responsive to the needs of the residents in cases of emergency," WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said in a statement.

He added that it is also part of the district's commitment to get more involved with the community to protect them and maintain peace and order.

Bulaong also said the community could use the text hotline to give them tips on the whereabouts of wanted people.

For his part, WPD deputy for administration Sr. Supt. Juanito de Guzman said he expects Manila residents to use the hotline once it is launched because it would expedite things for them.

"Sending a text message to the police is easier for people than looking for a telephone or going to the community precinct to report a crime," he said, noting that more people seem to have cell phones than landlines.

Smart subscribers would be able to access the WPD hotline by typing the word WPD, then space, then their message and sending it to 700PIT (700748). The message would be sent to the district's tactical operations center. The WPD would then send back an automatic response to indicate that the message had been recorded.

Bulaong said the letters PIT stand for Patrol, Investigation and Traffic, which are the three main thrusts of the WPD. He added that the hotline is also in support of the City Hall's "Buhayin ang Maynila" project.

The WPD chief also said the public could call up the WPD through 523-3378 if they want to report anything.

Malabon prosecutors move to new offices

NEW YEAR, new offices.

Prosecutors and their staff in Malabon City no longer had to endure the narrow and crowded container vans that served as their offices for almost five years.

Just recently, they moved into the newly built prosecutor's building in Barangay Catmon, the construction of which almost did not push through because of political bickering by city officials.

Construction of the building began in April during the term of then acting Mayor Mark Allan "Jayjay" Yambao. But work had to be stopped during the elections and only resumed when the present local chief executive, Mayor Canuto Oreta, took over.

But as they say, all's well that ends well. Now, the prosecutors and their staff are enjoying the comfort and ambiance of offices.

The new one-story building has nine rooms for prosecutors, a big room for the chief prosecutor, a kitchen and separate toilets.

It is located near the site of their former container van offices and the scrapped multi-million City Hall project.

"This is definitely so much better compared to what we had before, it's more decent and spacious," Malabon-Navotas chief prosecutor Jorge Catalan Jr. said.

He added that construction of another area, which will serve as conference, library and stock rooms, will soon begin in the building's adjacent lot.

The prosecutors had to move to the container vans after a fire razed their offices in July 2000, he explained.

They then moved into two 20-foot container vans temporarily provided by the city government.

Tina G. Santos

BUSINESS AS USUAL. The New Year may mean new beginnings for many, but it was still a working day for this tired young hawker who stayed at his post across Roxas Boulevard in Manila as kids his age frolicked and partied at the entertainment and food strip by the bay.

REM ZAMORA

2 suspects in killing of QC businesswoman nabbed

By Tina G. Santos

A BUSINESSWOMAN was stabbed dead Sunday night in Quezon City. The suspects: the two male household helpers she hired just a few months ago.

Victim Ruditha Sanchez, 40, was found dead with a slit throat and multiple stab wounds in different parts of the body inside her house on Ijan Subdivision, Barangay San Bartolome, Novaliches. Her body was discovered by her husband, Lauriano, shortly before midnight, police said yesterday.

The suspects, whom police identified as Bryan Bautista and Rolando Centeno, were nabbed later at their safehouse in Malinta, Valenzuela, during a follow-up operation.

Modus operandi

Senior Supt. Nicasio Radovan, Central Police District director, said it was the modus operandi of the suspects to initially apply as househelp and then rob their employers.

"We've had other similar cases that's why we're now trying to collate other records to check if these suspects were also the ones involved," Radovan said.

Hatching a plan

Bautista had been the victim's houseboy for four months, while Centeno was hired just a month ago. But unknown to the victim, the suspects had long known each other and were hatching a plan to rob her, police said.

Recovered from the suspects were the victim's pair of gold earrings and bracelet.

During interrogation, the suspects denied that they were the ones who killed Sanchez and instead pointed to another cohort whom they identified only as Crisanto. However, they admitted that they took the victim's P100,000.

With Arlene A. Ferrer, trainee

Manila opens new business permits office

THE MANILA City government yesterday opened a renovated business licenses and permits facility aimed at boosting the city's revenue collection.

The opening of the new Business Promotions and Development Office (BPDO) came just in time for the permits renewal period of the city's business owners.

"This new facility will give our taxpayers an easier and more convenient time of getting their licenses," said Manila Mayor Lito Atienza when he dropped by the renovated BPDO office at the City Hall's ground floor yesterday.

The new office provides a new, more spacious waiting area and organized counters corresponding to each step of permits application or renewal, from verification of business record to payment.

On the mezzanine level are the administrative offices housing BPDO's new computers that for the first time would process permits renewals and applications.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Davao City drug dealers were executed

On Target

Ramon Tulfo

THOSE suspected drug dealers who were caught during a raid at the shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) laboratory in Davao City were not killed in a shootout but were executed.

In police parlance, they were "salvaged."

Everybody in Davao City knows that. But nobody is raising a howl of protest over their deaths. People in the city want their place completely drug free.

Those killed were chinky-eyed guys, probably mainland Chinese or Taiwanese. They didn't have any identification papers on them.

Pity the families of those guys who probably don't know about their grim fate until now.

Those guys were probably ignorant of the situation in Davao City. If petty criminals such as drug pushers and snatchers of cellular phones are executed by unidentified vigilantes in the city, how much more for big-time drug dealers who would victimize thousands of Filipinos?

If those drug dealers were not executed and they were sent to prison, they would be directing inside their prison cells the operation of other syndicate members. They were believed to be members of the Triad or Chinese Mafia.

The Triad is a big drug syndicate with tentacles in many places in Asia. The Triad could even spring its members in jail if it wanted to. It has connections with some corrupt law enforcers.

* * *

Unimpeachable sources in Davao City told me eight other Triad members who were not killed in the supposed shootout with policemen at the shabu laboratory were eventually arrested. But then they were not turned over to the authorities.

What happened to them is anybody's guess. They are probably buried in unmarked graves in a remote place in the city.

This is not to speak in favor of vigilante killings, but if they would discourage foreign drug syndicates from operating in our country, then let the vigilantes do their thing.

Anyway, we have a lousy judicial system where many judges and prosecutors can be bribed. And the Triad has the money to bribe judges and prosecutors.

* * *

Journalist Tony Calvento is a changed man. From a hotheaded pistol-packing toughie years ago, the guy has turned into a very patient man.

On Dec. 31, New Year's Eve, Calvento took his two teenage sons to the Holiday Inn at the Mimosa complex inside the Clark Economic Zone. They were to spend their New Year's Day at the former US Air Force base.

One of his sons, Jesus Christopher, had a haircut at Frankie's barber shop inside the hotel. The doting father accompanied him to the barber.

Suddenly, Tony saw his son bleeding profusely on the nape. A big chunk of flesh was sheared. Something went wrong with the electric razor, the barber told Tony.

He asked the hotel if there was an in-house clinic. There was none. Calvento rushed his son to a hospital outside Clark.

Nobody from the barber shop and from the hotel staff showed concern for the boy. They could have at least accompanied the father and his bleeding son to the hospital.

"Mon, I wanted to wring the barber's neck, but I restrained myself," Calvento said.

The barber was lucky. In his hothead days Calvento would have kicked and pistolwhipped that barber who, when asked what he would do to stanch the bleeding, put "tawas" on the wound.

I'm glad about Calvento's turning a new leaf. We had a tiff several years ago because of his hotheadedness.

He is now the director of my TV show "Isumbong mo kay Tulfo."

P. Buenaventura; 81

PRIMITIVO F. Buenaventura, keyboard jazz performer, composer and arranger, died on Dec. 31 in Baliuag, Bulacan, after a lingering illness.

He is a nephew of National Artist for Music Col. Antonino Buenaventura, and grandson of Lucino Buenaventura, founder of Banda Baliuag.

Primitivo's contemporaries in the late '50s and '60s included Lito Molina, Rey Conde, Bobby Enriquez and Eddie Katindig Sr.

Interment is scheduled on Jan. 6 after the 2 p.m. necrological rites at the St. Augustine church in Baliuag.

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METRO

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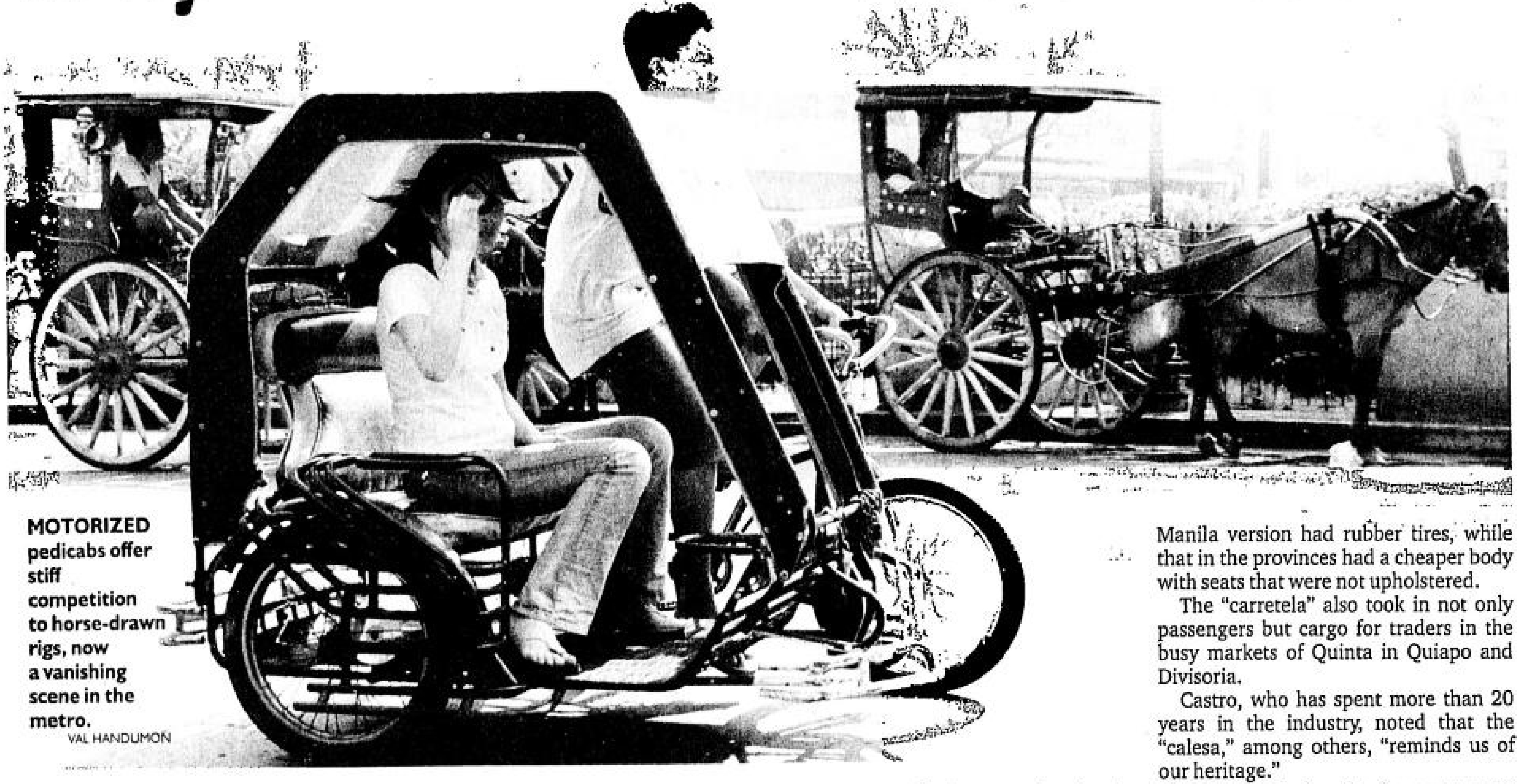
'Calesa' may soon be off Metro roads

By Jerry E. Esplanada



MOTORIZED pedicabs offer stiff competition to horse-drawn rigs, now a vanishing scene in the metro.
VAL HANDUMON

ADD the "calesa" to the list of endangered, if not vanishing local modes of land transport.

From around 2,000 in the 1980s, only 300 or so horse-drawn rigs are currently plying Metro Manila's streets.

In Manila, only 143 "calesas" were registered last year in the market administration office of City Hall.

The data did not tally with those at the city government's Business Promotions and Development Office, where less than 20 "kutsero" (rig drivers) secured mayor's permits in 2004.

More bad news. Prospects for 2005 are "not very good," according to Antonio Gatmaitan, president of the Tondo (Manila)-based Samahan ng mga Kutsero at May-ari ng Kalesa, Inc.

"We expect more 'calesa' owners to go out of business this year. It is a dying trade, and has barely survived the onslaught of both motorized and non-motorized pedicabs," Gatmaitan told the INQUIRER.

Hired like a taxi, the "calesa" has been losing its regular customers to non-motorized pedicabs (also known as sidecars), according to Gatmaitan. "Just check out Divisoria, Tondo, Blumentritt, Quiapo, Sta. Cruz and Chinatown in Manila; Maypajo in Caloocan City; Araneta Avenue and other parts of Quezon City, and you'll see what I mean," he said.

"Mang Jun," from Dandan, Tondo, confided he had been driving pedicabs as a "sideline."

"I used to make over P400 a day as a 'kutsero,' and much more during peak seasons. Now I'm lucky to take home P100-150," he said.

The minimum fare for short distances on a "calesa" is P30. Apart from a daily "boundary" charge (the owner's share in earnings) of P150, an additional P235 is shelled out for a permit from the mayor's office, and P20 for police clearance.

Today, a "calesa" operation needs a capital of at least P30,000 for the horse and the calesa.

The "calesa" operator also shoulders the P50 daily expense for horse feed, including grass supplied regularly by farmers from Cavite and Laguna.

With the rising expenses, Gatmaitan said he and his fellow operators need all the help they can get from both the national and city governments to save the trade, especially now that revenues expected from the tourist trade are getting harder and harder to come by.

"Mang Ely," a calesa operator from Baltazar St., Tondo, wondered aloud if the tourism department or the National Commission on Culture and the Arts could help their cause.

Reacting to media reports that some 1.86 million tourists visited the country during the first 10 months of 2004, Dan Castro and fellow "kutseros" based in the Plaza Sta. Cruz area said they hardly felt the uptrend.

"It seems only Metro Manila hotels benefited from the reported high tourist arrivals which were seen by the DOT to reach 2.3 million by year's end," said Pedring Lansang, another rig driver.

"*Mukhang 'di kami naambunan* (It looks like we were not recipients of the windfall)," said Lansang, who described "calesa" drivers" as "among the most friendly and most dedicated species in the tourist profession, people who do their tasks with a lot of pride."

The horse-drawn "calesa" (or "carretela") was introduced in the country during the 18th century. It was used by Spanish officials and distinguished families as a means of transportation.

The *ilustrados*, rich and educated Filipino businessmen, used the "calesa" not only for traveling but as a means of transporting their goods as well.

Driven by a uniformed "kutsero," the "calesa," had four wheels, wide seats, a folding top and upholstery.

A ride costs from two to six times more than the fare for taking a "carromata" or commoner's carriage, a canopied rig which seated only one passenger. Its Manila version had rubber tires, while that in the provinces had a cheaper body with seats that were not upholstered.

The "carretela" also took in not only passengers but cargo for traders in the busy markets of Quinta in Quiapo and Divisoria.

Castro, who has spent more than 20 years in the industry, noted that the "calesa," among others, "reminds us of our heritage."

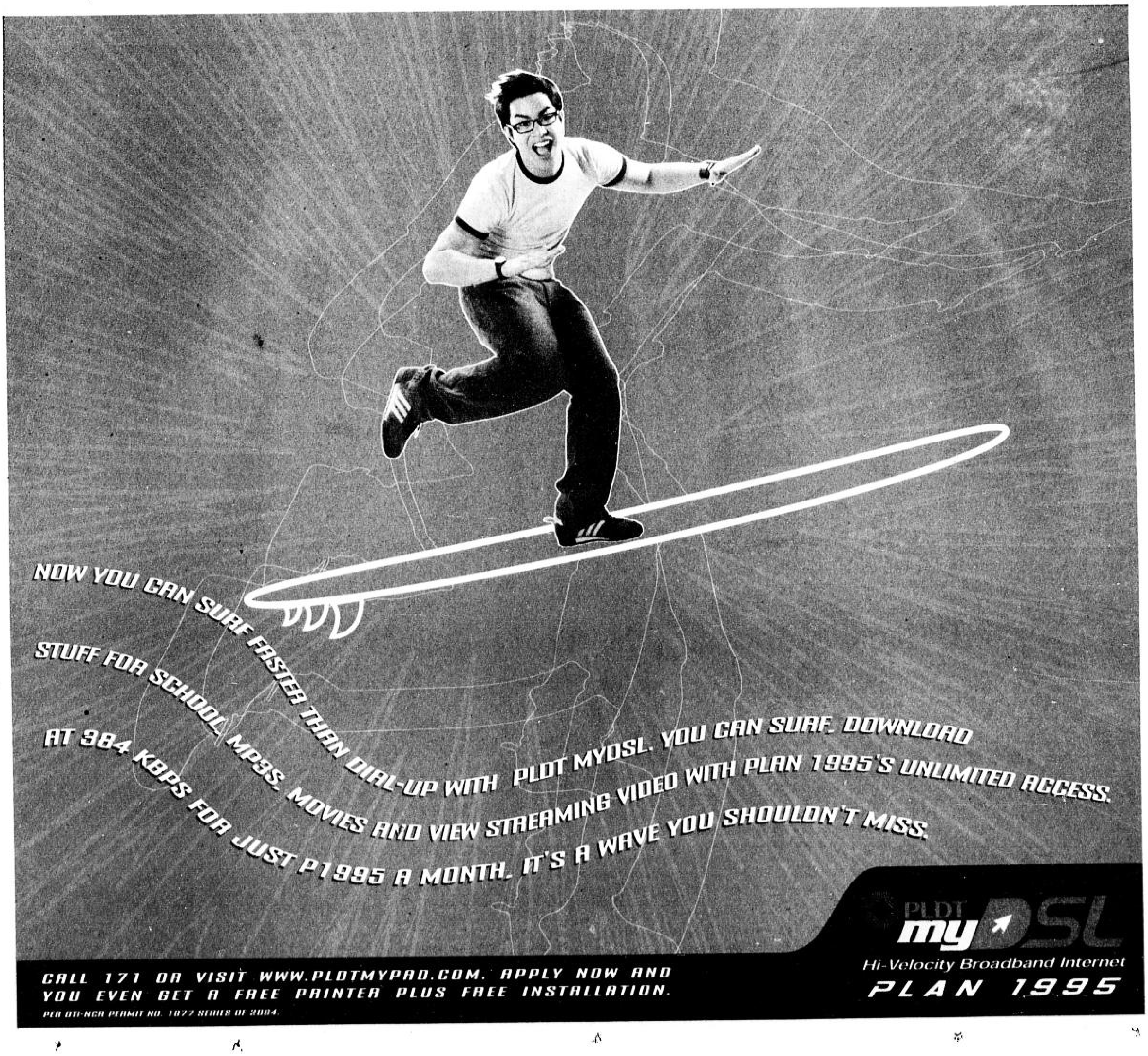
"If nothing is done by the government to save the trade, the 'calesa' will soon be a thing of the past. Actually, they have already disappeared in many parts of the country where tricycles and non-motorized pedicabs now reign supreme," he added.

But Castro is not about to lose hope.

"With God's help, I think the 'calesa' and those who depend on it for subsistence will survive the hard times," he said.

Lansang added: "*Magdilang-anghel sana ang Presidente* (I hope the President is right)."

He was referring to President Macapagal-Arroyo's optimistic outlook for this year that "2005 would be a much better year than 2004."



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SPORTS TV
Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA–Pistons vs Bulls; 9:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports–The defending champs take on resurgent Chicago.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: US NCAA–Sugar Bowl; 9 a.m.; ESPN–Auburn faces Virginia Tech in New Orleans.

TENNIS: WTA–Kuznetsova vs Sharapova; 10 p.m.; Sports Plus–See who emerges victorious among these two stars in LA.

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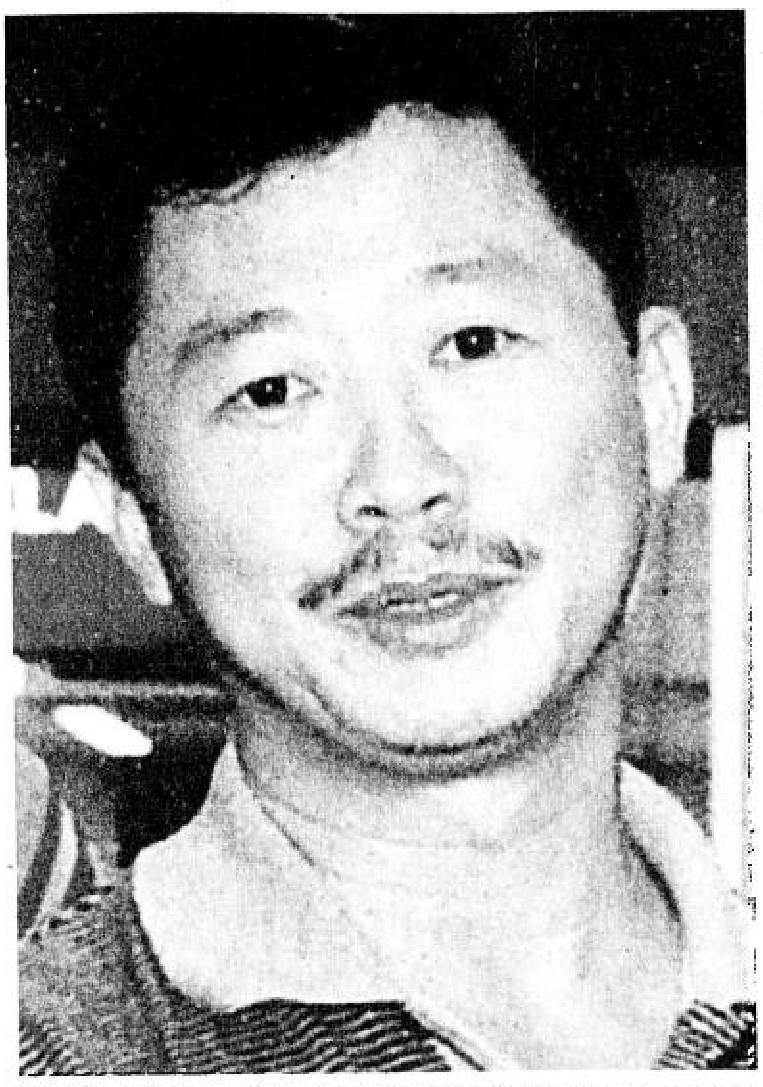
Lim can't be deported—counsel

BAP official's 'missing' documents reconstituted

**By Musong R. Castillo
and Jerome Aning**



GRAHAM Lim: Deportation proceedings to resume soonest. PDI PHOTO

"ONLY aliens can be deported."

Basketball Association of the Philippines legal counsel Bonifacio Alentajan blurted this out yesterday in reaction to a report on the impending deportation of BAP secretary general Graham Lim.

"Granting that he (Lim) is an alien, what has he done to deserve deportation," Alentajan said in Filipino.

"And if he is deported, where do they deport him? Deportation means being sent back to where you came from. Graham came from nowhere but the Philippines."

Alentajan is confident that the case against Lim, filed by former BAP official Tito Tagle and international referee Liberato Valenzuela, will be dismissed after he presents Lim's case before the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration.

The Immigration bureau's board of special inquiry is awaiting the *aide memoire* to be submitted by the complainants as well as by Lim and Alentajan after Lim's original documents were purportedly lost at the bureau.

An *aide memoire* is the recollection of details as one remembers them.

Lawyer Roy Almoro, Immigration executive director, however, told reporters yesterday that papers pertaining to Lim's case "have been reconstituted" after these were inadvertently misplaced at the office of one of the bureau's associate commissioners.

"The (Lim's) papers are here," said Almoro. "The case will be finalized in due time."

Almoro said any recommendation–on the merits of the *aide memoire* of both parties would be reviewed by the bureau's legal department, after which it would be forwarded to the commissioner for final approval.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. has said he will issue a decision upon receipt of the reconstituted documents.

According to Alentajan, Tagle and Valenzuela are pursuing the case after becoming casualties of a power struggle that rocked the association a few years ago.

Alentajan insisted that Lim's family has been in the country since 1875 and were made Filipino citizens by virtue of the 1902 Philippine bill and the 1916 Jones Law.

"The Jones Law allowed all inhabitants of the Philippine Islands who did not return to Spain after April 11, 1899 to become citizens of the Philippines," Alentajan explained. "It did not matter whether you are a Spaniard or whatever nationality."

Alentajan said he has gathered affidavits from Cagayan province to back up Lim's claim.

According to Alentajan, Lim was born in the Philippines on Feb. 7, 1957 to Chinese parents who, at that time, became citizens of the Philippines because of the Jones law.

He applied for naturalization only because of the advice of his counsel then, said Alentajan. "If at all, it was his (Lim's) only mistake in this case," the lawyer said.

Lim had earlier been declared an illegal alien by the Immigration bureau under Fernandez's predecessor, Andrea Domingo.

As a consequence, Lim was blacklisted and his passport was canceled. This did not prevent Lim, however, from traveling abroad several times using temporary documents issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales ordered Immigration officials to restart the case versus Lim in a memorandum dated Nov. 30.

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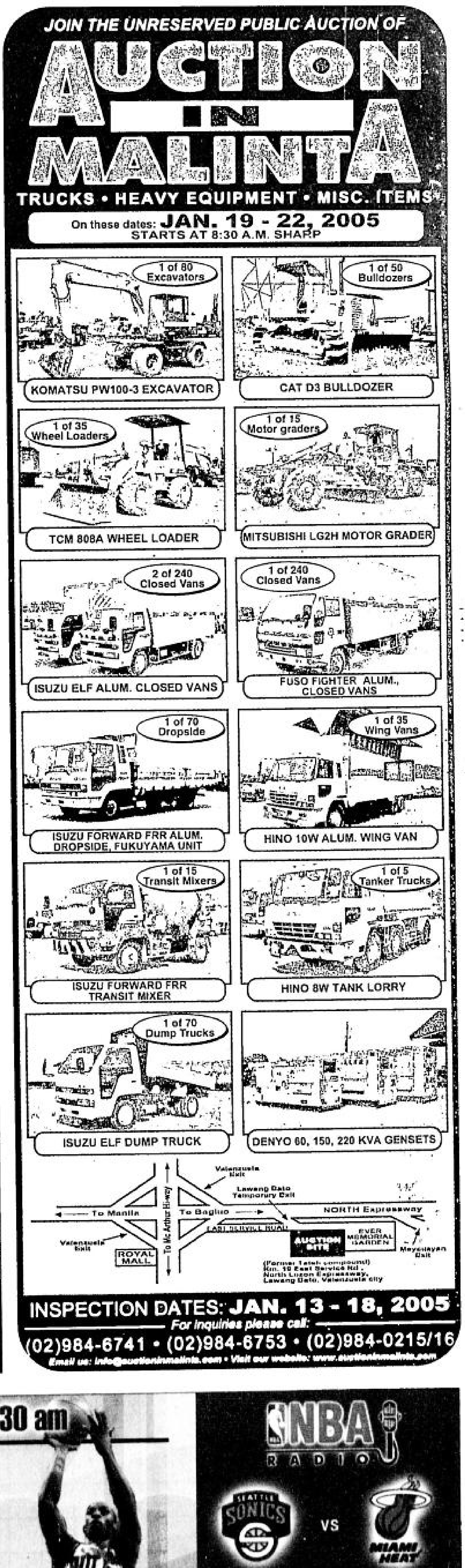
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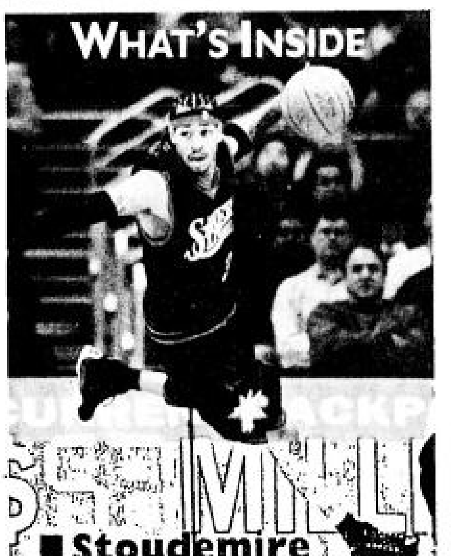
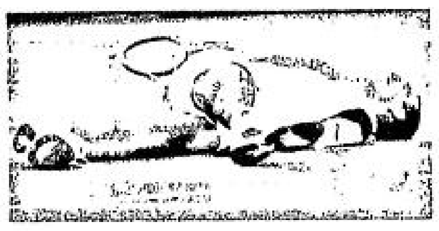
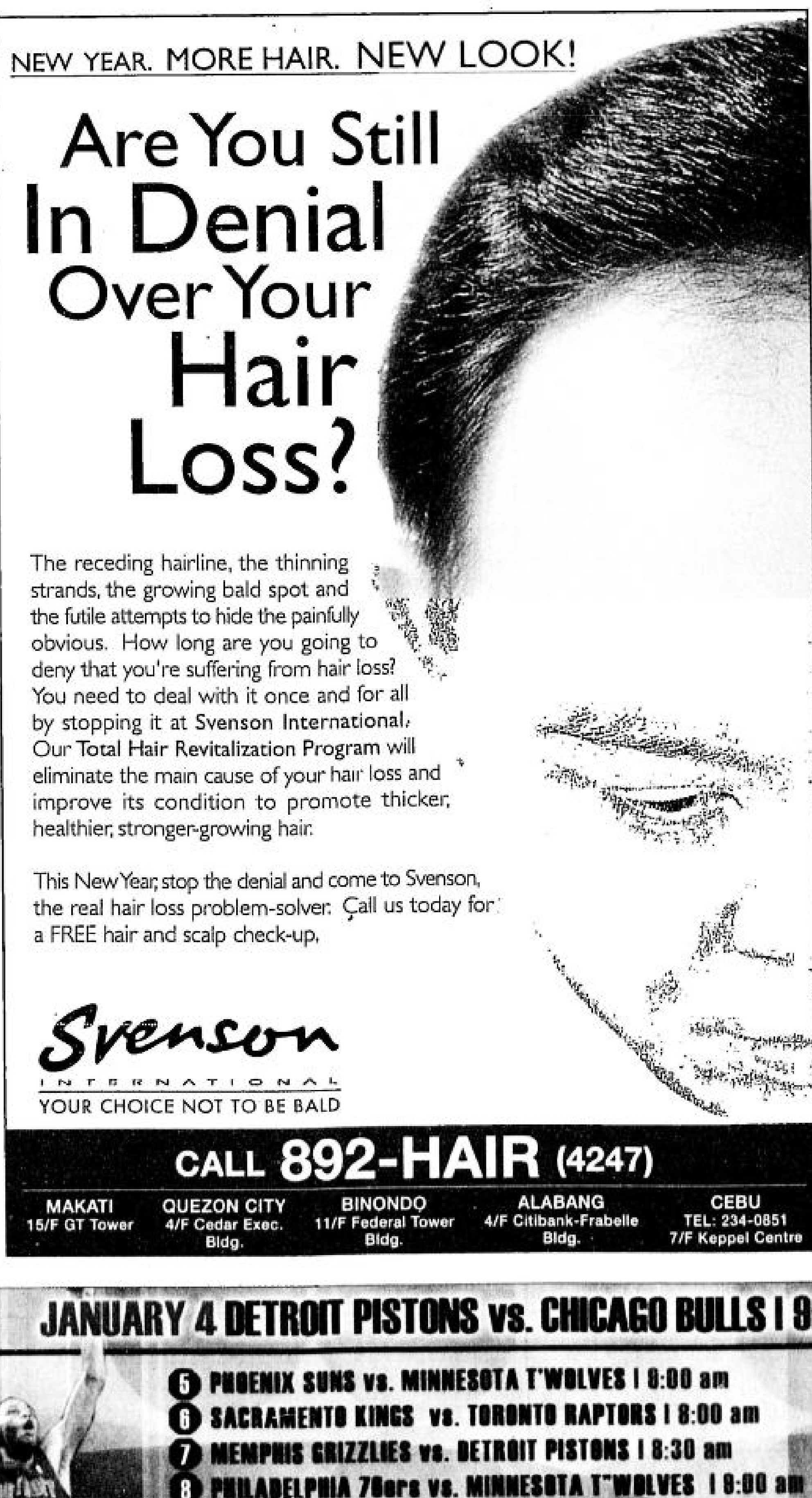

■ Stoudemire powers Suns/A20


■ Tsunami-wrecked Marina breaks Leander's heart /A20

■ Shining Jewels shoot for semis vs Air Phils /A19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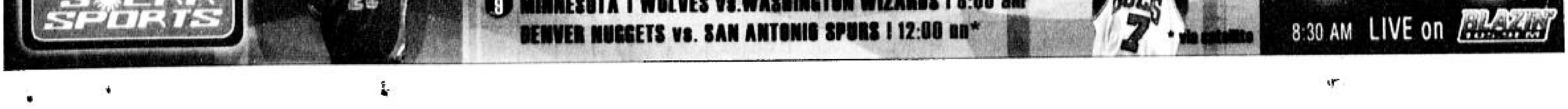
TV on SOLAR SPORTS
JANUARY 4 DETROIT PISTONS vs. CHICAGO BULLS I 9:30 am
5 PHOENIX SUNS vs. MINNESOTA T'WOLVES I 8:00 am
6 SACRAMENTO KINGS vs. TORONTO RAPTORS I 8:00 am
7 MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES vs. DETROIT PISTONS I 8:30 am
8 PHILADELPHIA 76ers vs. MINNESOTA T'WOLVES I 8:00 am
9 MINNESOTA T'WOLVES vs. WASHINGTON WIZARDS I 8:00 am
DENVER NUGGETS vs. SAN ANTONIO SPURS I 12:00 nn*
* via satellite
NBA RADIO
SEATTLE SONICS VS MIAMI HEAT
8:30 AM LIVE on BLAZIN'

RP quintet coach known today; Eala keeps mum

By June Navarro

BANAL: 150 percent backing

REYES: Comprehensive plan

CONE: Biggest break

GUIAO: Very engaging

FINALLY, PBA commissioner Noli Eala's closely-kept "secret" will be revealed today.

The Philippine Basketball Association is set to appoint the head coach of the men's national team today based on the recommendations of Eala, who managed to keep the league's choice close to his chest for a full week.

Eala personally made the selection—from among Chot Reyes of Coca-Cola, Joel Banal of Talk 'N Text, Tim Cone of Alaska and Yeng Guiao of Red Bull Barako—last Dec. 28.

The commissioner, however, deferred the announcement pending the meeting of the PBA board of governors today.

He was supposed to reveal the league's choice Wednesday last week but a lack of quorum forced PBA chair Buddy Encarnado to move the board meeting today.

Eala said no one, including the governors and the other members of the committee that screened the four applicants last month, knows about his choice.

Eala hinted, though, that his choice has the experience, the personality to command respect from the PBA stars who will be chosen to don the national colors, and a clear direction on what he wants to achieve in the next four years.

In addition, Eala said, the coach has the total support of his mother ballclub.

"A major part of my decision was based on the questionnaires the candidates answered," the commissioner said. "I believe it is more objective than the interview part."

Reyes is said to have submitted a comprehensive basketball program for the next four years, detailing the tasks and targets of the national team through a precise timetable up to 2008.

Banal is reportedly getting "150 percent backing" from the Talk 'N Text management.

Cone and Guiao were described by PBA insiders privy to the screening as both "very engaging" during their interview.

Apart from the appointment of the head coach, the board will also tackle the funding for the national team.

Each of the candidates has already experienced what it's like to coach the national team.

Cone, however, has had the biggest break among the four. He guided the PBA-backed national team to a bronze-medal finish in the 1998 Asian Games.

Reyes and Guiao served as assistant coaches to different RP squads early in their careers, while Banal played for the country several times and coached the Pasig Pirates of the now-defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association in an Asian tournament.

In making his choice, Eala sought advice from former commissioner Rudy Salud, former senator Sonny Jaworski and San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico, who steered the RP team to a fourth-place finish in the 2002 Busan Asiad.

The national team will compete in the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) championships this year in Doha, Qatar, and in 2007 in Saitama, Japan, which will put up two slots at stake for the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Bata, Django, Alex vying in US tourney

FILIPINO pool wizards Efren "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan will go up against the world's best when they compete in The United Player Association (UPA) Pro Tour Championship starting today at the Bicycle Casino in Bell Gardens, California.

A total of 64 players, including 2001 World Pool champ and 2003 UPA titlist Mika Immonen of Finland and four-time world 9-ball and US Open champion Johnny Archer of the United States, are vying for the crown in the $50,000 event which will run up to Jan. 9.

Reyes and Bustamante are recipients of major awards from the Philippine Sportswriters Association for their achievements in international billiards last year, while Pagulayan is a special awardee.

Other prominent entries are Canadian champion Luc Salvas, former world and US Open 9-Ball champion Ralf Souquet of Germany, South Korean titlist Young Hwa Jeong and world artistic pool champion Mike Massey.

Meanwhile, Filipinos Jose "Amang" Parica and Santos Sambajon dropped their final-round assignments yesterday in the Pechauer West Coast Tour at the Hard Times Bellflower in California.

The 55-year-old Parica, who is based in La Fuente, California, yielded to Ismael Paez, 6-7, and settled for a share of 13th to 16th places.

The 46-year-old Sambajon, of North Terrace California, bowed to Corey Harper, 4-7, and wound up in a tie for 17th to 24th places.

Max Eberle defeated Dave Hemmah, 13-8, in the finals to pocket the top purse of $1,000. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Rampaging UST spikers gun for No.6 vs Lady Stags

By Musong R. Castillo

SANTO Tomas shoots for a sweep of the first round today when the rampaging Tigresses collide with San Sebastian Lady Stags at the resumption of the Shakey's V-League at the Rizal Coliseum.

The defending champions Tigresses have been virtually untouchable, winning their first five games and flaunting the form worthy of a repeat championship.

They clash with the Lady Stags at 3 p.m.

Second-running La Salle tries to keep Santo Tomas in sight when it tangles with dangerous Lyceum at 5.

"We have been playing good defense all tournament long," said Santo Tomas coach August Sta. Maria. "This match will not be any different. Defense will still be the key."

The defense Sta. Maria is so proud of will be put to the test again today. San Sebastian teems with attackers and toughened by several victorious years in the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Jennifer Bohawe, San Sebastian's brightest star in both indoor and beach volleyball in the 1990s, spearheads the Lady Stags, who coach Roger Gorayeb confessed took extra long vacations during the holidays.

Roxanne Pimentel banners the Santo Tomas offense with help coming from Kate Co Yu Kang, a high-leaping power-hitter, and Mary Jane Balse, the most valuable player of the tournament's first conference.

Santo Tomas sets the pace with a 5-0 card, with La Salle in second at 3-1. Of the teams that played all their first-round assignments, the PSC Lady Legends won four of six and Far Eastern prevailed in one of six.

The top four teams after the double round-robin eliminations will advance to the cross over semifinals.

STANDINGS	W	L
Santo Tomas	5	0
La Salle	3	1
PSC	4	2
Letran	2	4
Lyceum	2	4
San Sebastian	1	4
Far Eastern	1.	5

GAMES TODAY
(Rizal Coliseum)
3 p.m.—Santo Tomas vs San Sebastian
5 p.m.—Lyceum vs La Salle

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Tuesday January 4, 2005

8:30 pm
TUESDAYS
10:00 pm
Wow mali
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The Probe Team
DOCUMENTARIES

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Sprits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat Teen Quest	Bida Si Mister Bida Si Misis			Insider	Pipol
NBN	Value Vision				Teledyaryo	Value Vision		APEC Primer 2		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Mosconi Cup 2003				Auto Focus	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	KNN	Anime Ring Kasho				Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Race Hour	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	8 Simple Rules	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Crossing Jordan		John Doe		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Treat		
IBC 13		Japan Video Topic		EZ Shop		IBC Express Balita		Home Shopping Network		Retro TV		Global Family Series		Entrepinoy	Good Take	Travel	IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	
Solar		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Brother's Garcia	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	All That	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	Rocket Power	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brother's Garcia
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Meet My Folks		The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	Knock First	One Tree Hill		The O.C.		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	Fightbox	Smallville		Angel		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		The Men's Room
AXN		The Amazing Race		The World's Most Extreme Races		Fear Factor		Gensomaden Saiyuki	Gensomaden Saiyuki	7 Days		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		The Amazing Race		The World's Sexiest Commercials	
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Road Trip		The Apprentice		UC Undercover/ Justin Timberlake Down Home In Memphis		Friends	Road Trip
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters		Treasure Seekers		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat Geographic Specials		Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters	
Solar Sports													NBA TV Daily						
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens Of	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	It's Good To Be	A Second Look		Look For Less	Style Star	Road & Track	Back To Basics	Planet Parent	Hot Off The Grill
HBO		Blue Thunder (2:55 PM)			The Charlie's Angels Story			Only You (6:15 PM)				The Net (8:05 PM)				Six Feet Under 27 Perfect Circles	Red Water (10:45PM)		
Star Movies	Ring Of Darkness			Man From Elysian Fields			Raising Arizona (5:45 PM)				Stuart Little			Jet Lag			The Bread My Sweet		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	TBA					Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show	Courage The Cowardly Dog	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Addams Family	The Funky Phantom	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		World Pool League '04 Warsaw, Poland		College Football Bowl Game- Michigan vs Texas							Winter X Games VIII Slammed CO USA	Sportscenter Taiwan	World Pool League '04 Warsaw, Poland						
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim.	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax				Among Thieves			Don King Only In America				Free Willy 3 The Rescue			Deadly Swarm			John Carpenter Presents: Body Bags		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Five Days To Midnight				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Mysterious Ways		Judging Amy		Torso			Changi (10:35PM)		Mysterious Ways
Discovery Channel		Civilisations				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Best Of Discovery			
MTV Philippines		MTV Live		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits	05 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	MTV Lokal		Non-Stop Hits	MTV Bolahan	TRL		Punk'D	Wildboyz	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus										NFL									
EWTN	Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Mysteries Of The Rosary	My Little Angels	Angel Force	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Fr. Groeschel	Catholic Morality & The Catechism	EWTN Gallery	The Journey Home		Does The Church Still Teach That	Lord, Have Mercy	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	We Are One Body	Web Of Faith	

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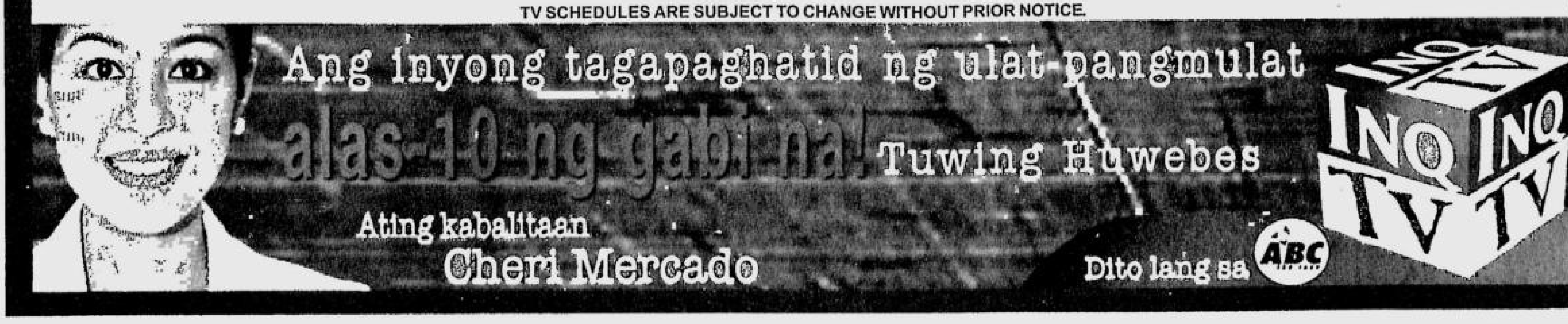

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PACQUIAO: Marquez will need all the training he can get against me.

Pacquiao: Marquez needs to train harder

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

MANNY Pacquiao yesterday wrapped up shooting for a Darlington socks commercial and brushed aside Juan Manuel Marquez's edge in preparation for their much-awaited Feb. 26 rematch.

The Filipino world ring celebrity can still afford to taunt his Mexican foe.

"He (Marquez) will need all the training he can get against me," Pacquiao said in Filipino, during an interview with Viva Sports' Ronnie Nathanielsz.

Pacquiao said he is not at all worried that Marquez has a two-month headstart in training, adding he is confident he can get in tip-top shape in time for the fight set in Las Vegas.

The fighter from General Santos City will leave for the United States—two days earlier than his original Jan. 8 schedule— to again hook up with trainer Freddie Roach.

Roach has handled Pacquiao's conditioning, which reached its peak during his first fight with the crafty Marquez.

But rumors of Pacquiao attending parties, derbies and staying up late have worried his supporters, who feel he might not be 100 percent for the rematch.

Pacquiao engaged Marquez in a classic match-up between boxer and brawler in a bout that ended in a controversial draw.

Pacquiao knocked Marquez down three times in the first round of that fight.

The 26-year-old Ring Magazine featherweight king is fresh off a fourth-round knockout of Thailand's Fahsan 3K Battery in a much-ballyhooed Dec. 23 fight in Taguig City.

But fight observers said Pacquiao clearly lacked preparation and was gasping for breath starting in the second round.

Marquez, the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation featherweight king, has reportedly lined up countryman Marco Antonio Barrera as his next foe after beating the Filipino.

According to James Blears of the boxing website Boxingscene, Marquez said he is confident of beating Pacquiao this time.

Barrera scored two clear wins over another Mexican great, Erik Morales, in their classic trilogy.

Marquez maintained that his friendship with Barrera will remain, and that the potentially explosive collision between the two Latino legends would make "perfect financial sense."

SPORTSWATCH

Galan, Seloterio on target for US stint

TEN-YEAR-OLD Jan Nigel Galan and Antoni Angelo Seloterio, 11, opened their respective bids for berths on the US-bound Milo Checkmate team by posting back-to-back wins in the under-10 and under-12 age groups in the tournament held over the weekend at the MCC headquarters at the J&F Divino Building in Quezon City. Galan of Valenzuela City beat Jerome Corpuz of Nueva Ecija and Aldous Roy Coronel of Quezon City to lead the under-10 section after two rounds of play. Seloterio of San Jose, Bulacan, defeated Might Noche of Makati City and top under-12 semifinalist Kim Lo of Quezon City. The best-of-five showdown between the flu-stricken Julius Caesar Marquez and Rommelle de los Santos in the junior bracket was moved to Jan. 8. Still in contention in the under-10 are Malcolm Kwok, who still has to play his four games Monday, and Brena Mae Membrere of La Union, who took a bye in the early round. In the under-12, Raymund Astillero of Valenzuela City, who lost to Lo in the first round, kept his hopes by stunning Noche in the second round. Six slots—three in under-10, two in the under-12 and one in the junior section—are being contested in this event organized by the Metropolitan Chess Club to give promising Milo Checkmate enrollees the chance to gain exposure abroad. The winners will join seeded players Emmanuel Emperado and Gabriel Layugan in the US campaign. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Carlos, Isip rule executive chess

NATIONAL Master Leonard Carlos of Malabon and SSS senior analyst Frederick Isip of San Pablo City ruled their respective divisions in the Metropolitan Chess Club Executive 1 & 2 active tournaments held last week at the MCC headquarters in Quezon City. Carlos, coach of the UP varsity team, defeated dentist Jenny Mayor, the five-time national executive champion, in 36 moves of a Center Counter game in the fifth round to finish in a tie with fellow varsity coach Jose Aquino Jr. of CLSU at 4.5 points. Carlos bagged the Category 2 title due to better tiebreak quotient. They shared the combined purse of P10,000. The seventh-ranked Isip, meanwhile, drew with PNP supply officer Romeo Mateo to tally 4.5 points and claim the Category 1 title. He won P5,000, courtesy of CEO of Primanila Plans Inc. president Ed Madrid. In other matches, Cris Codiñera Jr., former senior account officer of PAL, upended Bayer sales supervisor Dong Ata to tie for second in Category 1 with DAR consultant Lito Dormitorio, who prevailed over Philam Plans unit manager Ruben Bulaclac. Rounding out the top 10 were: Category 1—4. Mateo, 5. Romeo Talavera, 6. Arvin Olorvida, 7. Bulaclac, 8. Ata, 9. Virgilio Sevandal, 10. Amando Labarda. Category 2—3. Juman Marcelo, 4. Fami Fazon, 5. Rommel Tacorda, 6. Randy Segarra, 7. Mayor, 8. Manolito Padrigone, 9. Baldemar Salvador, 10. Noel de la Cruz. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Altamirano's e-basketball listings on

FORMER Philippine Basketball Association champion coach Eric Altamirano yesterday announced that enrollment has started for the International Basketball Academy's "e-basketball" classes set Jan. 10 in three venues. Categories are divided into Beginners (11 and under) and Advanced (12 and above). Interested students may call 8842778 to 86 (loc. 41-42, and look for Vera), 6311195, 0918-9259313 or e-mail inquiries at iba_phil@yahoo.com. Classes are to be held every Monday from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the adidas Sports Kamp in Bonifacio Global City, every Friday from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at clubsixfifty in Libis, Quezon City, and every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Reyes Gym in Mandaluyong. Students will get one free basketball T-shirt, free use of basketball training aids, use of Plyosports equipment, personalized individual workouts, personal video analysis, game-like competitions and tips from surprise PBA guest players.

Pinoy bid to conquer Everest gets boost

THE FIRST Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition got a big boost recently after ABS-CBN signed on as the exclusive network sponsor of the three-year quest by a team of Filipino climbers to conquer the "roof the world." Team members said ABS-CBN's assistance will help encourage more local and international companies to become part of the Filipino effort to conquer the 29,035-foot Mt. Everest. Thirty-five veteran climbers from all over the country will soon undergo a rigid two-year preparation for the 60-day climb, slated May 2007. The Mountaineering Federation of the Philippines headed by Transportation Undersecretary Arturo Valdez, Regie Pablo, Butch Sebastian and Fred Jamili are at the forefront of the adventure. ABS-CBN will help promote the expedition through a massive media campaign. The network will also feature the different alpine climbs of the RP team in other countries as part of their training and preparation for the Mt. Everest trek. The coverage will take the viewers all the way to the final selection process for the 15-member team that will do the actual Everest ascent. Also backing the expedition is events management company Mary Lindbert International.

P1 million up for grabs in LPC derby

A GUARANTEED prize of P1 million is up for grabs in Las Piñas Coliseum's "Pamigay Premyo 5-Cock Derby" which gets under way this Saturday, Jan. 8. Sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000 and hoisted by former mayor Nene Aguilar, the derby will have 2-cock elimination rounds on Saturday, Jan. 15 and 22. The initial entry fee is P2,200. Entries who qualified for the championship round on Jan. 29 shall pay an additional entry fee of P6,600. "We are adopting this format in response to popular clamor from small-time cockers and breeders who want to advertise their gamefowls on a minimal investment," said coliseum manager Alex Tobias. Tobias said the P1-million prize will be given to the winners regardless of the actual number of entries. The champion will get P700,000; runner-up, P100,000; the three-pointers P150,000; top handler, P30,000 and best gaffer, P20,000. Submission of weights is on derby day from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. For reservation of cockhouses, call 8743910, 8731040 or 0920-5609404.

Gentlemen Cockers line up 12 big meets

TWELVE big-time derbies, all of them 7-cock events, will be presented by the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) at Las Piñas Coliseum this year, with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. The first GCAP cockfest sizzles on Monday and Wednesday next week, according to Patrick Antonio, who founded the 35-strong group last year with an original 22 members. Highlight of the super showdown of prominent cockers and breeders is the battle for the coveted Cocker of the Year award. The winner stands to get a guaranteed prize of P1.5 million, the biggest prize so far for such an awardee. GCAP's highly successful stag derby series last year produced a darkhorse winner in Tony Faustino of Davao, who became its first ever Stagfighter of the Year. Meanwhile, Rep. Rudy Albano of the popular Mulawin entry, was elected recently as GCAP's new president, along with the other officers: Mayor Nene Aguilar, chair; Tony Lasala, treasurer; Lito Orillaza, Gerry Ramos, Poi Estrellado, Benjie Lim, Jen-jen Arayata, William Go and Ronnie Lacsina, directors.

Thunderbird renews strong support

GAMEFOWL industry leader Thunderbird Power Feeds continues its valuable assistance to derby promoters nationwide by sponsoring a series of cockfests in the Year of the Rooster. Thunderbird Platinum will be the exclusive sponsor of the P1-million Mayor's League 5-Cock Derby kicking off today and on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday at the Negros Coliseum. The entry fee is P8,800 for the event hosted by the Negros Association of Chief Executives Inc. and backed by breeder Otic Geroso. On Friday, Thunderbird Multi-Grain Concentrate will co-present a four-cock derby at the Bayombong Sports Complex in Nueva Vizcaya with Rizal and Larry Balgos. The derby dangles a prize purse of P500,000 for an entry fee of P16,500. On Jan. 20, 21 and 22, Rep. Danny Lagbas of Misamis Oriental will be backed by Thunderbird Baby Stag Booster for his 5-Cock Traditional Derby at the Igpit Sports Arena. The guaranteed prize is P2 million. Meanwhile, Uniprom Inc. and the hosts of the World Slashers Cup 8-Cock Derby have again signed up Thunderbird Power Feeds as the exclusive sponsor of the derby's edition this year.

Shining Jewels shoot for semis vs Air Phils

AFTER seven years of disappointing finishes, the Montaña Jewels are finally having their breakout season.

And the Jewels will try to keep their momentum going when they vie for the second outright semifinals berth against the luckless Air Philippines Flight at the resumption of the PBL Open Championship today at the Blue Eagle Gym in Loyola Heights.

STANDINGS	W	L
Magnolia-FEU	9	3
Montaña	8	2
Welcoat	6	5
Granny Goose	6	5
ICTSI-La Salle	5	6
Toyota Otis-Letran	5	7
AMP-Ateneo	3	7
Air Philippines	2	9

GAMES TODAY (***Blue Eagle Gym, Ateneo***)
2 p.m.— Air Philippines vs Montaña
4 p.m.— AMP-Ateneo vs Granny Goose

"It's been our principle to go out and play our best whether we're playing the best squad or the worst team in the tournament," said coach Robert Sison, whose Jewels now hold a franchise-best 8-2 record.

"We want to win as many as we can. Every game for us is important."

Defending champion Magnolia-FEU clinched the first semifinals slot after posting a 64-55 victory over Addict Mobile-Ateneo last Dec. 16.

The Flight, who are down on a nine-game drought, will miss the next round if they lose their matchup against the Jewels at 2 p.m.

In the second game, Granny Goose Tortillos will also try to turn things around when they battle the slipping AMP-Ateneo Eagles at 4 p.m.

"I can't explain what went wrong, but I hope the long break gave us new hope and new direction," said coach Jun Tan, whose Tortillos try to recover from their four straight losses at the Eagles' homecourt.

Granny Goose dominated the first round with a 6-1 record but has since slipped to third place, in a tie with Welcoat Paints at 6-5.

Just like Air Philippines, AMP-Ateneo must sweep its assignments to avoid early elimination. However, both teams must also hope that either Toyota Otis-Letran or ICTSI-La Salle drops its remaining matches.

In the first round, the Jewels leaned on Jon Dan Salvador to string a 74-66 win over the Flight, while Granny Goose relied on Alfie Grijaldo and JR Quiñahan in repulsing the Eagles, 70-64. *Jasmine W. Payo*

DAVAO
MONTAÑA
PAWNSHOP

MARK Andaya of Toyota-Otis gets fouled during a drive by Alwyn Espiritu (right) of Montaña.
ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

GMA to meet with Philsoc execs

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is to meet with officials of the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee today in Malacañang to iron out financial kinks and finally kick-start the country's preparation for the biennial Games slated Nov. 27 to Dec. 5.

The strategy to market the SEA Games needs the President's imprimatur before the Philsoc can present it to prospective private corporations willing to help the government foot the bill for the event.

Philsoc official and Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella has said Ms Arroyo's blessings will open the floodgates of sponsors for the Games, which needs to operate on a modest budget of about P800 million.

The President is also expected to induct the officers of the Philippine Olympic Committee, led by its new president, former Tarlac Rep. Peping Cojuangco. Cojuangco is also vice chair of Philsoc and president of the equestrian association.

The other newly installed POC officers expected to take their oath are chair Robert Aventajado (taekwondo), first vice president Puentevella (weightlifting), second VP Reynaldo Jaylo (judo), secretary general Steve Hontiveros (bowling), treasurer Julian Camacho (wushu) and auditor Mario Tanchanco (sepak takraw).

Harry Angping of softball, Vic Valbuena of table tennis, Sultan Jamalul Kiram of pencak silat and Gen. Edgardo Aglipay of badminton will also be sworn in as POC directors.

Although not in the agenda, sources said the President just might announce the replacement of Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain, who got transferred to the Games and Amusements Board.

Buhain's replacement is vital because the PSC is the chief disbursing agency of the Games the country last hosted in 1991.

Jewel of Bulacan

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

LAGUNA has Canlubang, Southwoods and Sta. Elena, not to mention the elitist The Country Club.

Cavite has The Orchard, The Riviera, Eagle Ridge and Sherwood Hills (I've cried a river for the death of Puerto Azul).

Rizal has The Eastridge, Valley and Forest Hills.

Batangas has the soon-to-be Philippine Open host Mt. Malarayat.

Blade for blade of every patch of grass, they are the best golf courses in down South.

But if you think the best golf courses outside of Manila are found only in Calabarzon, you are mistaken, fellas.

In a rustic place in Bulacan that is only about an hour's drive from Quezon City is a spanking expanse of land that cradles a golf course of exquisite beauty and unequaled charm. Called The Royal Northwoods, it sits in a swanky, elevated land not far from the sky.

Designed by the famed Australian master Graham Marsh, The Royal Northwoods (Coral na Bato, San Rafael, Bulacan) is a championship course, 36-36=72, measuring 6,989 yards. And that's just the tip of the so-called iceberg. In due time, it will be a 27-hole course—maybe 36 holes, who knows—as the 90-hectare land is a classic spot for a world-class golf course with a terrain very conducive to the game's classic traditions of test of endurance and skill.

No, it is not hilly like Valley. Neither is it mountainous like Forest Hills or Tagaytay's Highlands/Midlands.

The Royal Northwoods is a mix of what all of nature's beauty can offer: a panoramic view of Mt. Arayat, and the Sierra Madre ranges back of the clubhouse, plus the lush greenery of the Central Plains of Luzon.

Who would have thought a golf course of this amazing beauty would sprout in Bulacan, a province known for its clannishness?

But then, if there's a will, there's a way, right?

"The idea cropped up during a round at Capitol Hills, when the Capitol Hills was still the old Capitol Hills," said Obet Pagdanganan, who recalled discussing the establishment of a first ever golf course in Bulacan with engineer Cornelio "Ka Eliong" Pancho.

Said Obet: "It was actually Ka Eliong who passionately called for the realization of the idea."

That was in 1995. In 1996, the first nine holes became playable. In 1999, The Royal Northwoods became an 18-hole layout.

"The beauty of this golf course is that we decided among ourselves to just pitch in what we had, ideas, money, everything," said Tito Enriquez, the former mayor of Bulacan, Bulacan. "It's really hard to do the things we had to do, considering Bulacan's tradition of clan thinking. But amazingly, when golfers decide on something, there's nothing that can't be done."

Among the pioneers that helped give flesh to the vision of Ka Eliong were Jaime Pajara, Robert Wong, Rep. Plaridel Abaya and Justo Manalo.

Too bad, though, that when The Royal Northwoods was starting to bloom into a world beauty, Ka Eliong died. Right there. At the fairway of No. 4. A marble tablet that bears his face is now planted at the spot where he fatally fell following a stroke.

"Maybe a bust, if not a monument for Ka Eliong, should also be built to commemorate his legacy," said Pagdanganan, the Calumpit kid who was governor of Bulacan for 12 years.

I agree. The bust/monument would be a fitting crown to the hidden jewel of Bulacan.

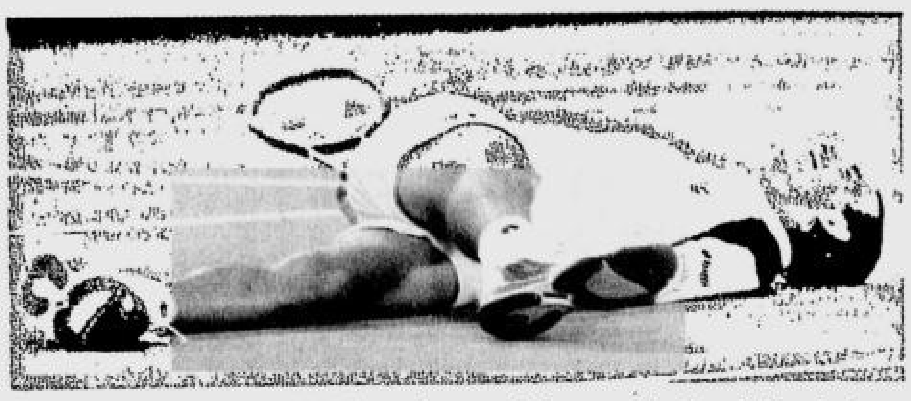
And add to that, how about also naming the road leading to the elegant, top-of-the-hill clubhouse, which is lined by swaying palm trees, the Ka Eliong Boulevard?

I can't wait to pass that road again.

***

FASTBREAK. Painter Danny Dalena is doubly happy today: He turns a new leaf after undergoing a successful cervical surgery. Happy birthday, Dalena!

Tsunami-wrecked Marina breaks Leander's heart



DOMINIK Hrbaty of Slovakia falls on the ground after reaching for a ball against Mark Philippoussis of Australia during their men's singles match in the Hopman Cup. Hrbaty won, 7-5, 6-2. AFP

MADRAS, India—India's Davis Cup star Leander Paes broke down when he visited the tsunami-wrecked Marina beach in this southern Indian city on Monday and pledged to raise funds for the thousands of victims.

The beach, five miles from the Nungambakkam tennis stadium where the ATP Chennai Open was to star later on Monday, was where Paes worked out as a teenager while training at the Amritraj tennis academy in the 1980s.

"Madras was home to me for five years and Marina was the place where we used to train," said an emotional Paes during a visit to the beach where almost 200 people died on Dec. 26 due to the killer tidal waves caused by an earthquake off the Indonesian coast.

"Early morning jogs four days a week, then all those training sessions, the diving and the lunging on the sands.

"It boggles the mind that now the same beach, home and a source of livelihood for many, is a devastated place. It really hits you and makes you realize the power of Mother Nature," the 30-year-old said.

Paes, an Olympic singles bronze medallist, was widely regarded as one of the best doubles players in the modern game after winning three Grand Slam titles with his Mahesh Bhupathi.

"I will donate whatever money I earn from the Chennai Open to the relief funds for the victims and also contribute in other ways to help them," he said.

That the US$400,000 season opener is being held at all is itself no mean achievement after tsunamis wreaked havoc across Asia and officially left 7,793 dead in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, of which Madras is the capital.

Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden and Bhupathi, who also decided to donate their prize money to the victims, were trying to persuade other players to do the same.

World number five Carlos Moya of Spain and Asia's flag-bearer Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand top the list of players taking part in the tournament which ends on Sunday. *AFP*

CAREER HIGH

Stoudemire powers Suns

PHILADELPHIA 76ers' Allen Iverson takes the ball down court against the Los Angeles Clippers. AP

PHOENIX—Amare Stoudemire scored a career-high 50 points, including nine straight during a decisive 12-2 Phoenix run early in the fourth quarter, to power the Suns over the Portland Trailblazers, 117-98.

Stoudemire, who had 20 points in the final period, shot 20-of-27 from the field and 10-of-17 from the foul line in amassing the highest point total by a Phoenix player since Tony Delk scored 53 against Sacramento in a 121-117 overtime loss on Feb. 2, 2001. Stoudemire's previous high was 38, against Minnesota in the 2002-2003 season and against New Orleans this season.

Wizards 104, Hawks 101

In Washington, reserve guard Juan Dixon scored all 15 of his points in the fourth quarter to help the Washington Wizards to victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Larry Hughes led the Wizards with 26 points while Antawn Jamison added 19 and Gilbert Arenas 17 for Washington, which had lost its previous two games.

Antoine Walker, who finished with 18 points, hit a 3-pointer to pull the Hawks to 102-101 with 3.1 seconds left. Jamison's two free throws with 2.2 seconds remaining sealed the victory.

The Hawks (5-24) have lost four straight and have the worst record in the Eastern Conference.

Clippers 89, 76ers 83

In Los Angeles, Elton Brand and Corey Maggette each had 26 points, leading the Clippers past the Philadelphia 76ers.

Allen Iverson scored 35 points while playing at least 40 minutes for the 10th straight game. He shot 16-for-30, while the 76ers' other starters were a combined 4-for-20 from the field.

Chris Kaman had 13 points and 12 rebounds for the Clippers, who had lost eight of their last 10 games and five of six against Philadelphia.

None of the Clippers' reserves made a field goal, but it hardly mattered after they built a 69-45 lead with 2:49 left in the third quarter.

Pistons 100, Celtics 88

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Rasheed Wallace had 23 points and 12 rebounds to lead Detroit, which won for the fourth time in five games.

Six Pistons scored in double figures, including Tayshaun Prince, who had 18 points. Ben Wallace had eight points and 11 rebounds.

Rookie Tony Allen led Boston with a career-best 18 points. Jiri Welsch added 14 points and Paul Pierce had 13.

The Celtics have won just one of their last five games.

Mavericks 123, Bucks 104

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 39 points and Josh Howard scored 11 of his 25 in the fourth quarter to help Dallas pull away from Milwaukee.

Nowitzki, who scored 21 points in the first half, hit 14 of 25 shots from the floor for his 11th 30-point game of the season. The Mavericks shot 53 percent from the floor and equaled their season-high point total.

Kings 86, Spurs 81

In Sacramento, California, Peja Stojakovic had 28 points, including six three-pointers, and Mike Bibby scored 13 of his 16 points in the second half for the Kings.

Chris Webber added 14 points and 13 rebounds for Sacramento, which snapped the Spurs' five-game winning streak, The Kings also avoided their first three-game home losing streak since April 2000 with a gritty fourth-quarter performance.

Rockets 99, Jazz 80

Yao Ming scored 15 points while Juwan Howard had 14 as the Rockets (16-15) moved above .500 for just the second time this season.

Gordan Giricek scored 15 points for the slumping Jazz, who lost their forth game in a row and eighth in nine games.

Lakers 99, Nuggets 91

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored the Lakers' first 14 points in the fourth quarter and finished with 42 to carry Los Angeles.

Former Lakers star Michael Cooper lost for the first time as an NBA coach. He was promoted to head coach in Denver last Tuesday after the firing of Jeff Bzdelik and won in his debut Friday night against Philadelphia.

Bryant recorded his third consecutive 40-point game for the Lakers, who won back-to-back games for the sixth time this season. *Reuters*

Hopman Cup fans, visitors help victims

PERTH—Visitors to the Hopman Cup in Perth on Monday dug deep into their pockets to donate money to the victims of last week's devastating Indian Ocean tsunami.

The Gold Coin Day at the Burswood Dome was organized by the children's charity Unicef in the wake of the disaster, which killed at least 144,000 people across several nations.

Tournament organizers also donated a third of the money raised at the Hopman Cup New Year's Eve ball, expected to be around A$10,000 (US$7,746) A second Gold Coin Day is scheduled on Saturday, while further fund-raising events are planned at tournaments throughout this month, including at the Australian Open in Melbourne, the year's first Grand Slam event, which begins on Jan. 17. *Reuters*

Frazier makes second round

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Top-seeded Amy Frazier advanced to the second round of the US$140,000 ASB Women's Classic tennis tournament Monday with a 6-3, 6-3 win over fellow American Laura Granville.

Frazier, 32, took only an hour to beat Granville in their first meeting in a WTA event. The pair were among five Americans in action in six singles matches on the tournament's opening day at Stanley Street.

Frazier has played the tournament twice previously, losing in the second round both times.

Maria Vento-Kabchi of Venezuela, seeded seventh, was beaten, 6-4, 6-4, by Martina Sucha of Slovakia.

Fifth-seeded Marion Bartoli of France, a semifinalist in Auckland last year, defeated Abigail Spears of the United States, 6-1, 6-0.

"I think it was a pretty good match today but I can play a little better," Bartoli said.

"Obviously there's some hesitation because it's the first match of the new year and you don't know your level yet." *AP*

DAKAR RALLY

McRae tops 3rd stage, grabs overall lead

GRANADA, Spain — Scotland's Colin McRae won Sunday's third stage of the Dakar Rally to take the overall lead in the two-continent race as the event completed its route through Spain and headed to Africa.

McRae, a former World Rally champion, completed the day's 10-kilometer (6-mile) stage outside the southern Spanish city of Granada in seven minutes, 48 seconds, six seconds faster than defending champion Stephane Peterhansel of France, to climb atop the cars division with an overall time of 12:22.

"It was a very short distance and there won't be important differences," McRae said. "The car is going well and I have a very good feeling about this rally, I'm happy for now."

American Robby Gordon, who won the first stage and had held the overall lead, finished fifth in Sunday's stage in his Volkswagen, 15 seconds behind McRae, and slipped to No. 2 by one second.

"When you start in first position, it's difficult because you don't have any reference but I managed some great jumps and my suspension is working very well. I pushed the car as much as possible," the US stock car veteran said.

South Africa's Giniel De Villiers was third, two seconds back, with Peterhansel fourth, another five seconds back.

Frenchman David Fretigne won the day's stage on his Yamaha and extended his lead atop the motorcycle division to 11 seconds, while Dutchman Hans Bekx led the truck category by 24 seconds.

The timed stage near Granada attracted around 200,000 spectators.

The field of 229 motorcycles, 162 cars and 66 trucks were then ferried across the Strait of Gibraltar to Tangiers in Morocco before resuming the race Monday out of Rabat. Monday's racing will include 123 kilometers (76.5 miles) of competition out of the 666 kilometers (414 mile) between the Moroccan capital and the southern coastal city of Agadir.

This year's Dakar Rally, the 27th edition of the annual race, will cover 8,956 kilometers (5,566 miles) between Barcelona and Dakar, including 5,431 kilometers (3,375 miles) of competitive special stages before concluding on Jan. 16. *AP*

WIMBLEDON champion Maria Sharapova of Russia hoists her trophy after beating Venus Williams, 6-4, 6-2, in an exhibition match in Chiang Mai, Thailand. REUTERS

Rams dump Jets, gain NFL playoffs

ST. LOUIS—Marc Bulger threw for 450 yards and three touchdowns and Jeff Wilkins kicked a 31-yard field goal with three mintues, three seconds left in overtime Sunday to give the St. Louis Rams a 32-29 victory over the New York Jets, clinching their National Football League fourth playoff berth in five seasons under coach Mike Martz.

The Rams (8-8) won their last two games to qualify as the NFC wild card, and had a chance to win the West if the Seattle Seahawks lost to the Atlanta Falcons later Sunday.

Their effort took on more meaning when the Minnesota Vikings lost to the Washington Redskins, a result that meant the Rams had to win to make it into the postseason. The Jets (10-6) qualified before overtime began when the Buffalo Bills lost, 29-24, to the Pittsburgh Steelers. *AP*

MUHSIN Muhammad of the Carolina Panthers tries to make a catch over Jason Craft of the New Orleans Saints in Charlotte, North Carolina. AFP

Montgomerie sets sights on return to world top 10

LONDON—Seven-time European number one Colin Montgomerie has set his sights on returning to the world's top 10 after experiencing a difficult 2004.

The 41-year-old Briton has slipped to 81 in the official world rankings after struggling with his game for much of last year while in the throes of a divorce.

"I spent 12 years of my 17 as a pro in the top 10 in the world and I want to try to get back there," Montgomerie told BBC radio.

"It might take six months to a year at least, but that is the ambition.

"I have just got to try to get my own ranking up to where I feel it should be, at least in the top 25 in the world if not higher," he added.

Montgomerie, who holed the winning putt for Europe in their runaway Ryder Cup victory over the United States last September, was a regular in the world's top 10 from mid-1994 to mid-2001.

Although no longer the force he was when dominating the European game from 1993 to 1999, the straight-hitting Scot is still capable of success at the highest level.

An inspirational figure for Europe in the Ryder Cup, he produced scintillating form in last month's Target World Challenge in California, leading by two going into the final day before tying for third, three behind winner Tiger Woods.

He then ended the year on a memorable note by becoming an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

"This honor is wonderful for me personally and I'm very pleased to get it," he said. "I feel I have a lot more to give and it fills me with confidence going into 2005." However, Montgomerie conceded he considered quitting tournament golf after the break-up of his 14-year marriage to wife Eimear. *Reuters*

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THE ONLY woman he wishes to marry is Zsa Zsa, according to the comedian who has had 17 kids with five women.

WITH THEIR daughters Nicole and Zia

DOLPHY DREAM CAN COME TRUE

Zsa Zsa marriage annulled at last

By Philip C. Tubeza and Nini Valera

THE COURT of Appeals has paved the way for singer/TV host/actress Zsa Zsa Padilla to finally marry comedy king Dolphy.

In a one-page resolution, the CA's Special Fourth Division granted the motion of the Office of the Solicitor-General to withdraw its appeal for the appellate court to overturn a Parañaque court ruling granting the annulment of Padilla's marriage to her husband, dentist Modesto Tatlonghari.

"This appeal is declared withdrawn and terminated," said the Nov. 17, 2004, resolution written by Justice Delilah Vidallon-Magtolis. Associate Justices Perlita Tria Tirona and Arturo Brion concurred with the decision.

Padilla and Dolphy did not wish to comment on the court decision, their publicist, Nene Riego, told INQUIRER Entertainment yesterday.

Padilla and Dolphy also turned down interview requests from the news program "TV Patrol" on ABS-CBN, where they both appear as talents, as well as from the news program of GMA Network.

While he's alive

Padilla, 40, is the only woman that Dolphy, 77, wants to marry, the comedian told INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview in 2003.

Dolphy said he hoped to marry Padilla. "I hope soon," he had said, "when I can still walk without a cane. I hope I am still alive when she gets her annulment."

"Zsa Zsa's [Padilla] lawyer already got the certificate of annulment," Nene Atillano, Padilla's personal assistant, told INQUIRER Entertainment on the phone.

But Padilla wants 15 days before issuing a statement about the court decision, according to Atillano.

"You see, we also got [a favorable decision] before, but it was contested after a spate of publicity occurred before it was finalized," Atillano explained.

The court granted the withdrawal of the OSG opposition to the annulment after Padilla—real name Esperanza Padilla-Tatlonghari—filed a manifestation asking the CA to grant the OSG motion to withdraw its appeal.

Judge Helen Ricafort of Parañaque City RTC Branch 260 granted in August 2003 the annulment of Padilla's marriage to Tatlonghari, the father of Padilla's daughter, actress/singer Karylle.

17 children

Karylle yesterday said she herself had not heard from her mother about the case.

"I'd like to talk with her first before I give a comment to the media," Karylle said.

She hardly talks about the annulment case

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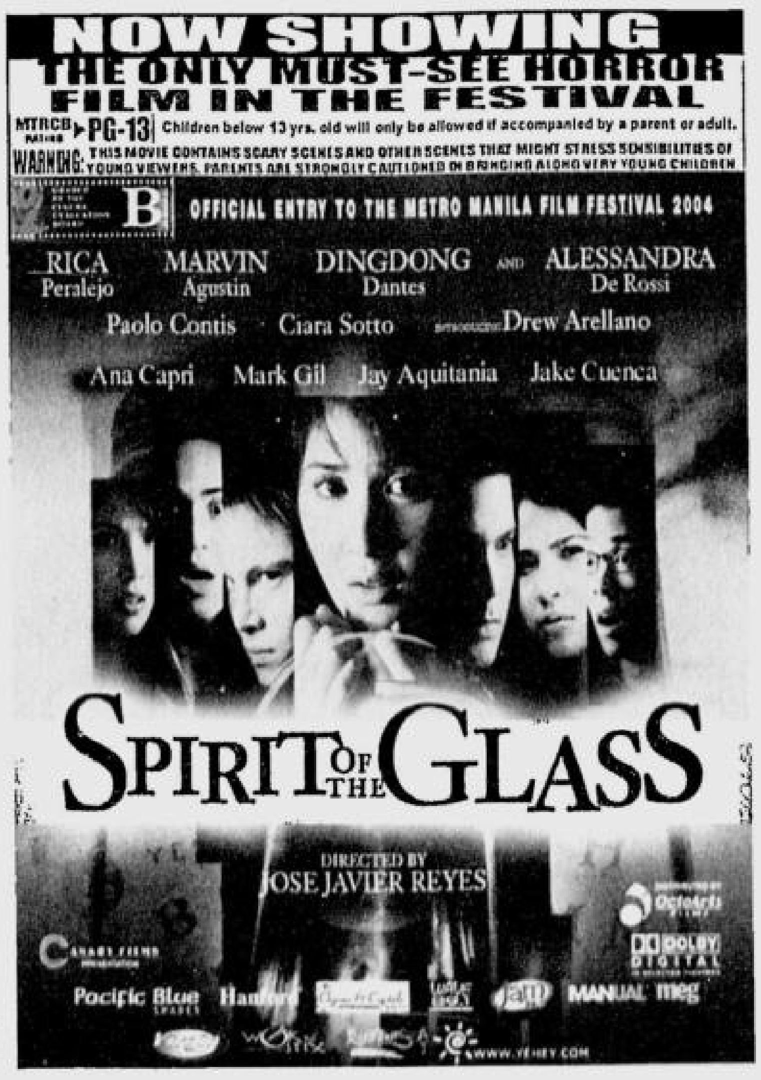

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5 MANO PO 3
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

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sm city baguio
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 LSTIKMAN
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 SIGAW

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
7 MANO PO 3
8 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

sm city batangas
1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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1 SIGAW
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
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8 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 LASTIKMAN
6 MANO PO 3
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 LASTIKMAN
5 AISHITE IMASU 1941
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

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Films with positive values for young viewers

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

MANY filmmakers say they shoot feature films just to provide entertainment for millions of viewers, nothing more and nothing less. But psychologists know better: They have studied the contents of many movies, and come to the conclusion that films impart positive or negative values, and provide role models for living.

Which films provide good example for viewers, particularly the youth? Some parents would like to know, so here are some "touchstone" productions, and what they can do:

"Beaches," directed by **Gary Marshall** and starring **Bette Midler** (C.C.) and **Barbra Hershey** (Hillary). The film is about two girls, one rich and the other poor, who become best friends. Over the years, their friendship is put to the test, especially when Hillary becomes ill. Before she dies, she asks C.C. to take her child.

The movie's healing themes: learning to trust your friends. Being friends for life. Being confronted with who you are. Achieving your potential. Learning how to cope and what to do when someone you love is about to die. And taking over the responsibility of raising a child in the name of love.

"Big," directed by **Penny Marshall** and starring **Tom Hanks**. Thirteen-year-old Josh gets his wish and grows up overnight. He becomes an executive, finds life, love, money and the American dream, yet he realizes he's lost his childhood. He undoes the wish and returns to finish growing up.

Themes: Finding the child within us. With freedom comes responsibility. Not trying to grow up too quickly. Feeling left behind by your friends. Learning that being an adult is not all it's supposed to be. And falling in love before you're ready.

"Broadcast News," directed by **James Brooks** and starring **William Hurt**, **Albert Brooks** and **Holly Hunter**. A top female news producer with high standards falls for a newsman on his way up who isn't what he appears to be. The time comes when she's forced to choose between the newsman and her ethics.

Themes: Following your convictions, being moral and ethical against all odds. What to do when someone you love creates a false image. Building a career and having time for nothing else. Realizing you can't control every aspect of your life. And letting go.

"A Christmas Carol," directed by **Brian Desmond Hurst** and starring **Alastair Sim** and **Jack Warner**. On Christmas Eve, tightwad Ebeneezer Scrooge is visited by three ghosts who show him his past, present and future. Amazed and terrified, he finally mends his thoughtless ways.

Themes: Taking a look at your past. Knowing that there's more to life than money. Getting a second chance at life. Accepting that life is full of love. And realizing that life shouldn't be all work and no play.

"The Color Purple," directed by **Steven Spielberg**, and starring **Whoopi Goldberg**, **Oprah Winfrey** and **Danny Glover**. Celie is still a child when she's married to Mister, who is more of a master than a husband. In time, she learns the ways of the world and finds the courage to gain her independence. With her freedom comes the return of a lost sister.

Themes: Looking at the extreme of prejudice. Experiencing sex against your will, and being abused. Learning to be your own person. Never forgetting a lost sibling. Triumph over tragedy. *(To be concluded.)*

"BEACHES," Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey

"BIG," Tom Hanks

"BROADCAST NEWS"

'Sideways'

All of a sudden, Alexander Payne's "Sideways" has pulled up ahead of many bigger productions, and has been hailed as a frontrunner in the 77th Oscars race. What makes the movie so special?

In the film, Miles (**Paul Giamatti**), a failed writer who teaches junior high school English takes his best friend, former hot actor Jack (**Thomas Haden Church**) on a weeklong drive up to California's wine country.

There, they explore why they failed, and question their relationships. Jack, who's about to get married, has an affair and wonders whether he should call off his wedding. And Miles tries to figure out if he's made the right choice while trying to form a relationship with the woman's best friend, a waitress.

Auditions for vocalists

The second audition for full-time entertainers in a new theme park in Asia will be held on Jan. 15 at the rehearsal hall of the San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts.

Applicants will be required to sing unaccompanied song excerpts, preferably from any animated feature film. Vocalists should prepare two vocal selections of contrasting styles, in English (best 16 bars of each).

Singers who pass the preliminary screening will audition in front of an international casting team on Jan. 23. Audition forms are available at the foundation offices at the basement level of the San Miguel Corp. complex beside SM Megamall. Call Deo at 632-3769 for more information.

Animation can be major RP industry, says German

By Alex V. Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—An internationally renowned animator who used to work with Walt Disney Productions has urged Dumagueteños to lay the groundwork for animation courses in what could be a major industry in the Philippines.

Hans Bacher, a German animator responsible for the production design of Walt Disney's hits, "Lion King," "Aladdin," "Beauty and the Beast," "Who Framed Roger Rabbit," and "Mulan," made the pitch in a talk before teachers and students of Foundation University here last Thursday.

Bacher, who has been living in the Philippines since 2003, noted a huge market for good animators in Asia.

"The way to do it is to have a studio here that will be known for producing top-quality animation. Then other companies will come in and perhaps [embark on] a co-production," Bacher said.

He said it would take from four to six years for one to become an animator. He himself worked as an assistant professor for animation and comic strip design at the University Essen for 15 years, Bacher said, while running a studio in Dusseldorf as an illustrator in European advertising and a producer of animation film for German TV.

He moved to the United States in 1994 to work with Disney as a feature animator. He is now an independent film producer and teacher.

Bacher cited the good potential of Dumaguete, with its four universities, as a major source of manpower.

The local governments of Dumaguete and the Province of Negros Oriental hope that Information and Communication Technology industries such as animation, call centers, medical transcription and publishing, will take advantage of the good infrastructure laid by the Isla Communications some five years ago.

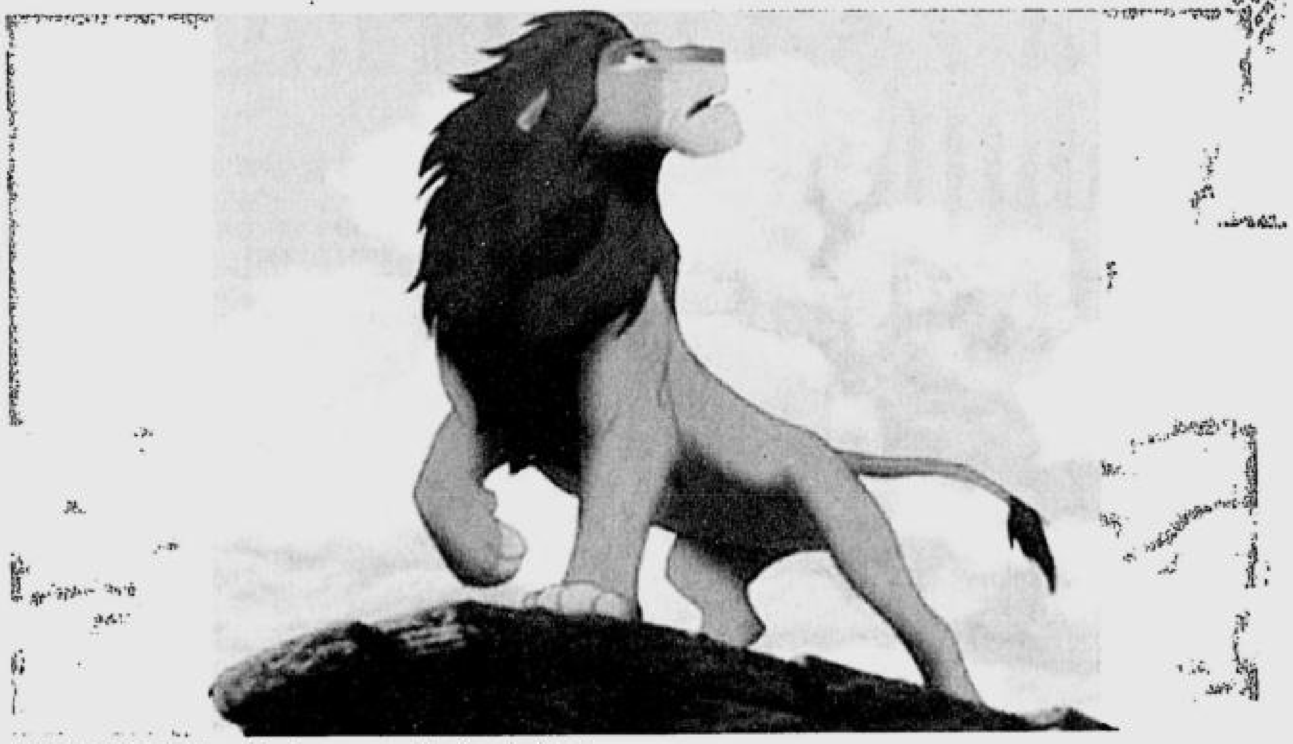
Victor Vicente Sinco, vice president for finance and administration and chairperson of Foundation University, said there are people in Dumaguete who are seriously considering animation as a business.

"It's 60 percent feasible here in Dumaguete," Sinco said.

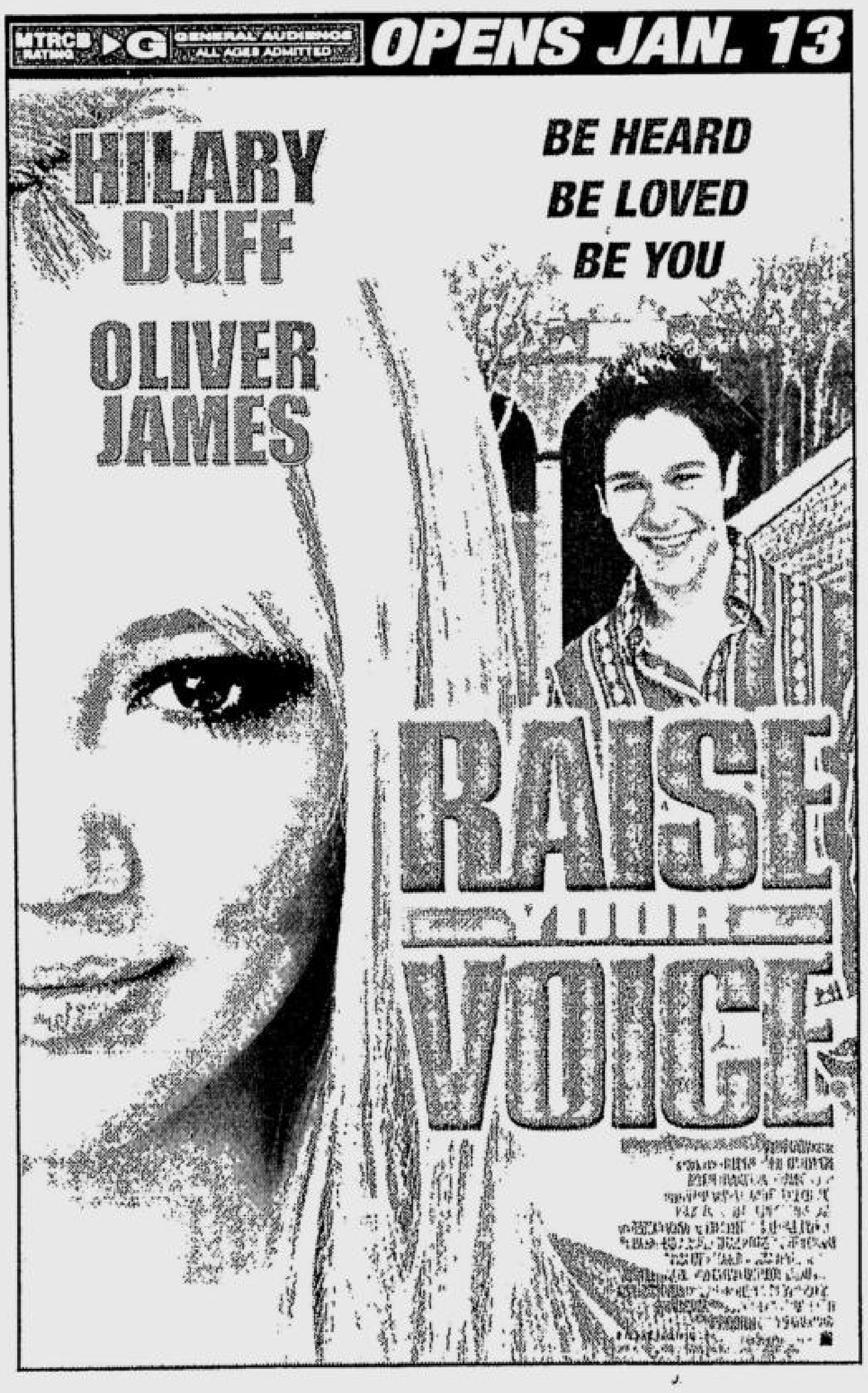
Last month, two members of the Animation Council of the Philippines visited Dumaguete to explore the possibility of creating a human resource center to train local talents and help build for the Philippines a name as preferred source of talent globally.

Marie Grace Dimaranan and Joy Bacon, ACPI vice president and executive director, respectively, encouraged the cultivation of creative talent that the ACPI could help develop.

Dumaguete is home to century-old institutions such as Silliman University, St. Paul University, and Negros Oriental State University, which turn out about 5,000 graduates each year.



"LION KING," where Bacher was production designer



Zsa Zsa marriage annulled . . .

From page A21

whenever she is with her mother, Karylle added.

Karylle lives with her father in San Juan.

In 1990, Padilla, while still married to Tatlonghari, made headlines by eloping with Dolphy.

Dolphy and Padilla have two daughters, Nicole and Zia. Dolphy has a total of 17 children by five different women, none of whom he married.

In seeking the annulment of her marriage, Padilla cited "psychological incapacity" on the part of Tatlonghari.

Tatlonghari is said to have found a new partner.

'Zsa Zsa needs counseling'

Fiscal Gil Sabedia, who initially handled the case, had opposed the annulment, saying it could provide a precedent for unrestricted and indiscriminate filing of annulment cases.

"This would destroy the image of the family that we so cherished and tried to protect," Sabedia said.

"(Padilla's) adulterous relationship with Dolphy makes her psychologically incapacitated, not (Tatlonghari)," he added.

Sabedia said Judge Ricafort merely considered the favorable opinion of psychologist Natividad Dayap and disregarded the psychologist's findings that "[Padilla] also is in strong need [of] counseling."

Aside from his wish to marry Padilla, Dolphy had said in an earlier interview that he had nothing more to ask of God for himself.

Last month, Dolphy and Padilla were rumored to be headed toward separation. The rumor was denied by Dolphy's son, Eric Quizon.

In a TV news program, Padilla also denied the split with Dolphy. She did not appear on camera, but a news item on the breakup said she had admitted there were some problems between her and Dolphy but that they still slept in the same bed.

Festering issue

Dolphy's continued financial support for his children is the festering issue between the comedian and Padilla, according to a movie producer. The producer said Padilla is fed up with Dolphy's children, some of whom are already in their 50s, who go to their father regularly for financial aid.

The dependent children do not include Eric Quizon and his siblings, as well as Vandolph, Dolphy's son by actress Alma Moreno.

But Riego, the couple's spokesperson, had said the couple's fight was not over money even if she admitted that Dolphy and Padilla have problems.

"Zsa Zsa knew from the start that Dolphy was supporting some of his children," Riego said in Filipino. "She is working and spending her own money. She has nothing to do with Dolphy's money."

It has been this way since the two became domestic partners 16 years ago, Riego added. "He gives her grocery money and pays for the household bills. But he can do what he wants with [the rest of] his money . . . like give it to his children."

But talk of their rumored split was dashed when the couple was seen together at the wake of Fernando Poe Jr. before Christmas. They arrived together and sat beside each other on the same pew until it was time for Padilla to go in front of the altar to sing during the necrological service.

Dolphy and Padilla became an item in the '80s and were crucified not only by the movie press but also by the industry and the public.

The movie they did together, "Anak ni Facifica Falayfay," failed at the box office.

From the pulpit

Dolphy said he had to sell pieces of property in order to survive the three years that he was jobless as a result of the condemnation.

"Even priests tackled our relationship in the pulpits," he said. "We were made the subject of sermons, an example of what should not be tolerated and imitated. We were called immoral."

He said he wanted to quit show business. "I no longer wanted to face the cameras then," he said. "I wanted to migrate to the States. I did not even want to look at magazines or whatever."

HK stars join tsunami relief effort

HONG KONG—Stars of Hong Kong's pop and movie worlds are chipping in to help the Asian tsunami relief effort with huge cash donations, pledges to help relief workers in stricken areas and fund-raising shows.

Movie star Cecilia Cheung said she would fly out to Indonesia's tsunami-hit disaster zones to help with the relief effort, a media report said Monday.

The elfin Cheung, who starred in the award-winning Chinese-language comedies "Shaolin Soccer" and "Running on Karma", told the South China Morning Post newspaper she would jet out on Tuesday.

The tsunamis, spawned by a massive Dec. 26 earthquake, killed more than 144,000 people when they slammed into Indian Ocean coastal towns in 11 countries, according to Agence France Presse.

The report said Cheung, 24, would join aid teams as a representative of the Hong Kong Actors' Guild.

She would also link up with action star Jackie Chan's son Jaycee Fong in presenting a telethon organized by veteran comic Eric Tsang to help raise money for the relief effort, it said.

Fledgling actor Fong, who with his father has donated HK $1 million (US $128,000) to the relief effort, will help rescuers in Khao Lak, the hard-hit resort on Thailand's devastated Phuket.

Meanwhile, a clutch of the southern Chinese enclave's top pop stars raised HK $5 million for tsunami victims in a star-studded concert fundraiser Sunday, promoters said.

Singer Joey Yung and heartthrob Nicholas Tse joined girl duo Twins and up-and-coming stars Yumiko and Isabella at the huge show Sunday.

AFP

JANNO GIBBS

Janno hits gold in 'Seven'

JANNO Gibbs proves his worth again with his new album, "Seven," from GMA Records.

Janno's newest music video for his second single, "Pinakamagandang Lalaki" from "Seven," was launched last month on the GMA-7 Sunday party show, "SOP." It featured different generations of gorgeous males stars, including Richard Gomez, Jomari Yllana, Dingdong Dantes, Richard Gutierrez and Janno's dad, the legendary Ronaldo Valdez.

"Seven" has turned Gold, having sold more than 15,000 original copies and still selling on its way to Platinum status. Its first single, "Fallin'" which Janno composed, is a big radio hit across the country.

Janno also conquered the SM Supermalls with a countrywide mall tour, including Baguio, Batangas, Pampanga, Cavite, Bulacan, Quezon, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro and Metro Manila.

He continues his tour, this time at SM Iloilo on Jan. 22 and SM Davao on Jan. 28.

"Seven" is available on CDs and cassettes from GMA Records—Kapuso...Kahimig and is distributed by Warner Music Phils.

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4 LASTIKMAN

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(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
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3 (DOLBY) SIGAW

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) MONO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
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4 SIGAW
5

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G4 GLORIETTA 4
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GUARANTEED SEATS 3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
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6 HAPPY TOGETHER
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GB3 GREENBELT 3
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3 SIGAW
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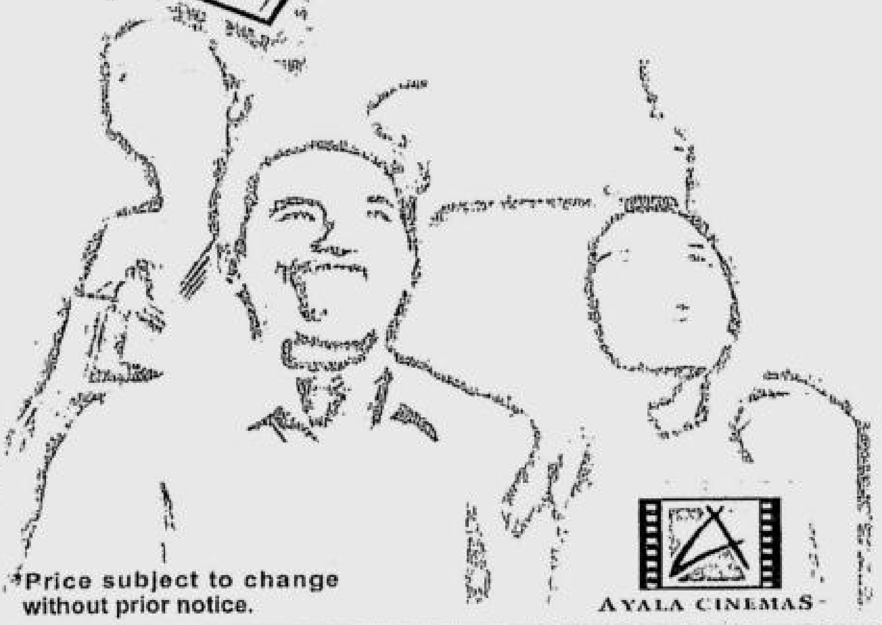

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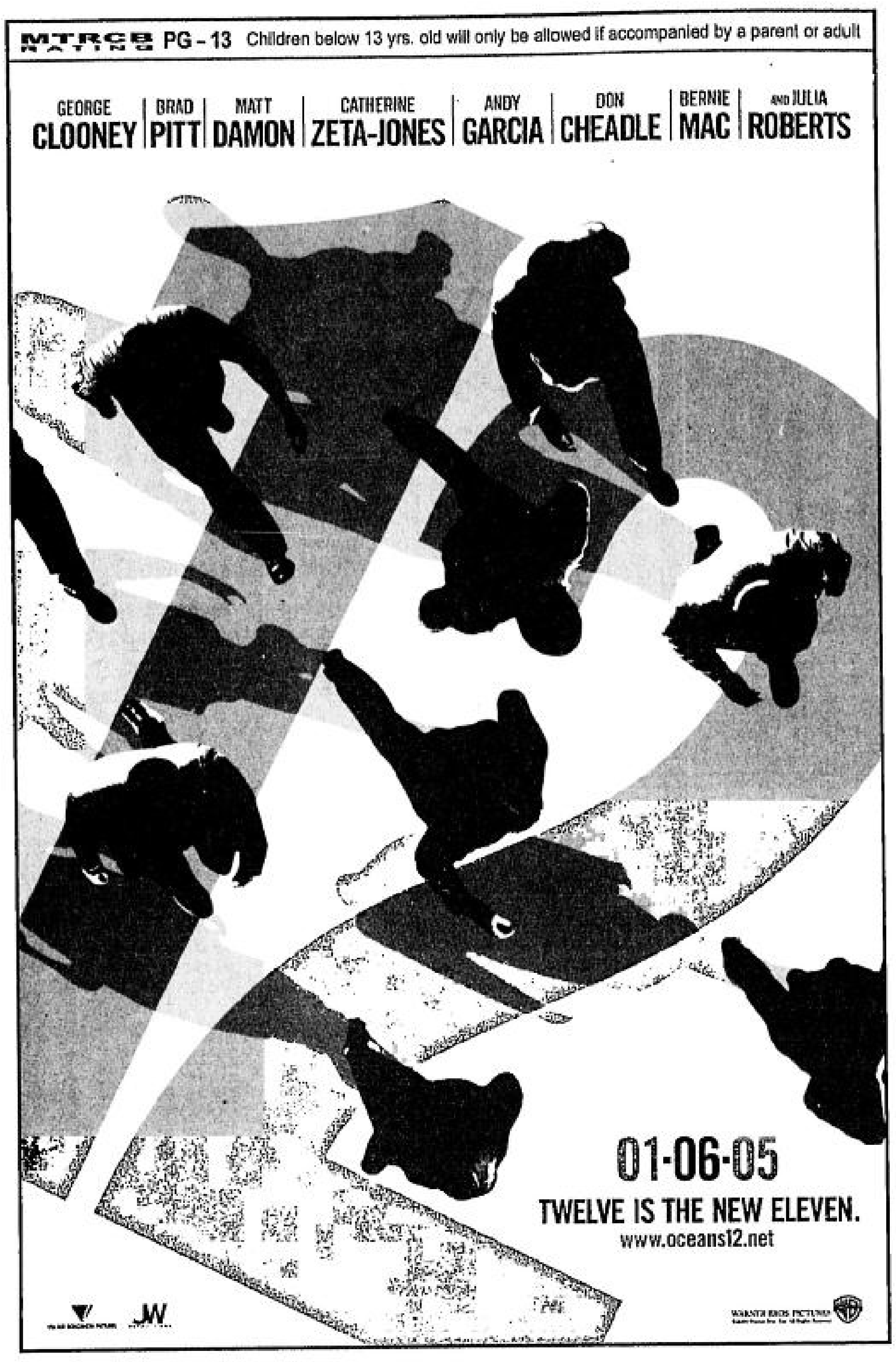

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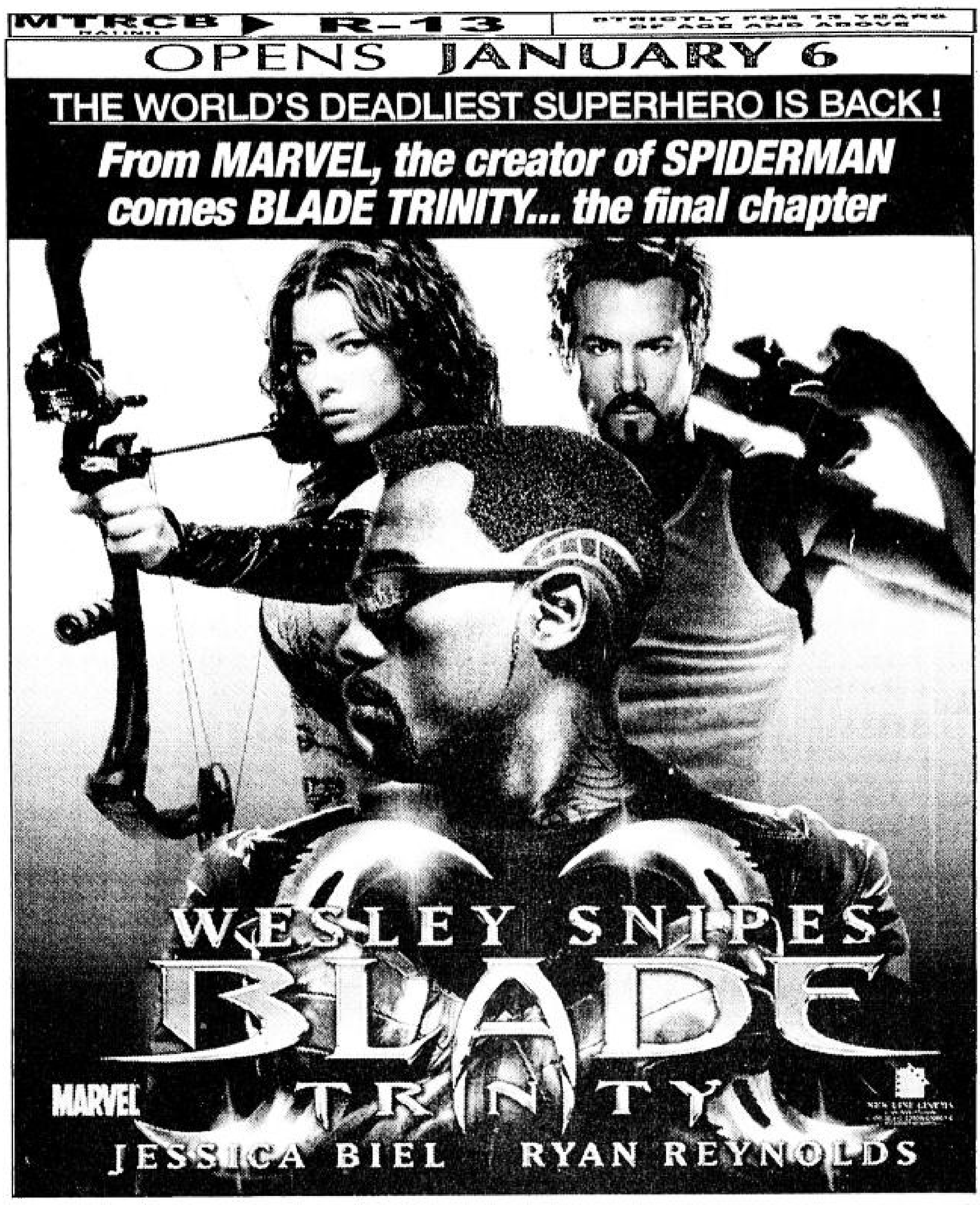

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sung by Karylle & Jerome John Hughes

VILMA SANTOS CHRISTOPHER DE LEON
SHERYL CRUZ JAY MANALO and EDDIE GARCIA

PATRICK GARCIA ANGEL LOCSIN ANGELICA PANGANIBAN JOHN PRATS CARLO AQUINO
BOOTS ANSON-ROA JEAN GARCIA KARYLLE DENNIS TRILLO

我的愛

MANO PO III

A FILM BY JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI

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ANG PINAKA NAKAKAKILABOT AT PINAKA NAKAKATAKOT NA PELIKULA NGAYON!
PANOORIN NA'T HANDANG SUMIGAWWWWWWWW!

BEST EDITING
BEST SOUND DESIGN
BEST CHILD PERFORMER - Ella Guevara

jomari yllana
james blanco iza calzado

richard gutierrez angel locsin in

SIGAW

pelikula ni yam laranas
ronnie lazaro ella guevara

Certified na nakakatakot na Box Office Hit na pelikula ngayon!

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STEPHEN CHOW

Being a good guy is harder than it looks.

功夫

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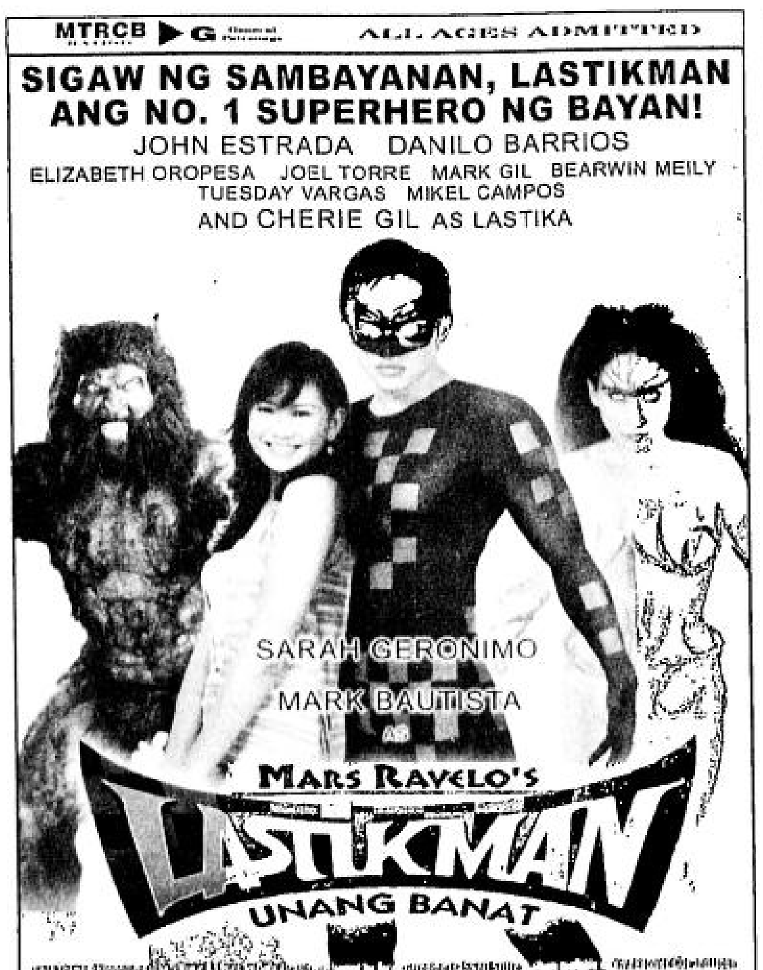

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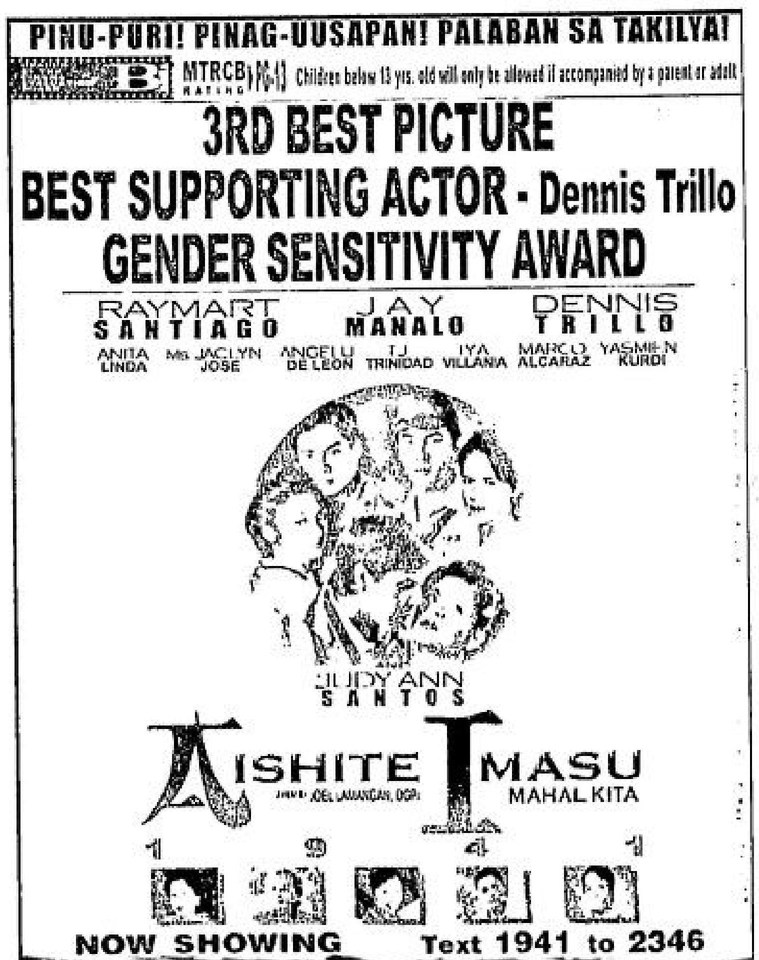
JOHN ESTRADA DANILO BARRIOS
ELIZABETH OROPESA JOEL TORRE MARK GIL BEARWIN MEILY
TUESDAY VARGAS MIKEL CAMPOS
AND CHERIE GIL AS LASTIKA

SARAH GERONIMO
MARK BAUTISTA
AS

MARS RAVELO'S LASTIKMAN UNANG BANAT

Directed by MAC C. ALEJANDRE NOW SHOWING VIVA



PINU-PURI! PINAG-UUSAPAN! PALABAN SA TAKILYA!

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3RD BEST PICTURE
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR - Dennis Trillo
GENDER SENSITIVITY AWARD

RAYMART SANTIAGO JAY MANALO DENNIS TRILLO
ANITA LINDA Ms. JACLYN JOSE ANGELU DE LEON TJ TRINIDAD IYA VILLANIA MARCO ALCARAZ YASMIEN KURDI

JUDY ANN SANTOS

AISHITE IMASU MAHAL KITA

JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI

1941

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Treasury bill rates rise across the board

By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY bill rates yesterday rose across all tenors as banks, cautious on the possibility that the central bank might raise its policy rates this month, showed weak appetite for government securities.

"It's the first day of the year. Banks are weighing their decisions and looking at how things will develop," said National Treasurer Norma L. Lasala in a press briefing after the auctions yesterday.

The 91-day treasury bill fetched 7.87 percent, or 8 basis points higher than the 7.79 percent recorded in the last auction in December 2004.

The three-month debt paper, whose rate is used by banks as a benchmark in pricing loans, was the only tenor oversubscribed yesterday. Tenders for the 91-day T-bill reached P6.46 billion, slightly higher than the P6-billion offering of the government.

A trader said, however, that the only reason the 91-day T-bill got a fairly sizeable bid volume was the high level of liquidity in the banking system.

"There is not much interest in longer-dated tenors because banks are still checking on their bond portfolios and are still looking at how to position themselves," the trader said.

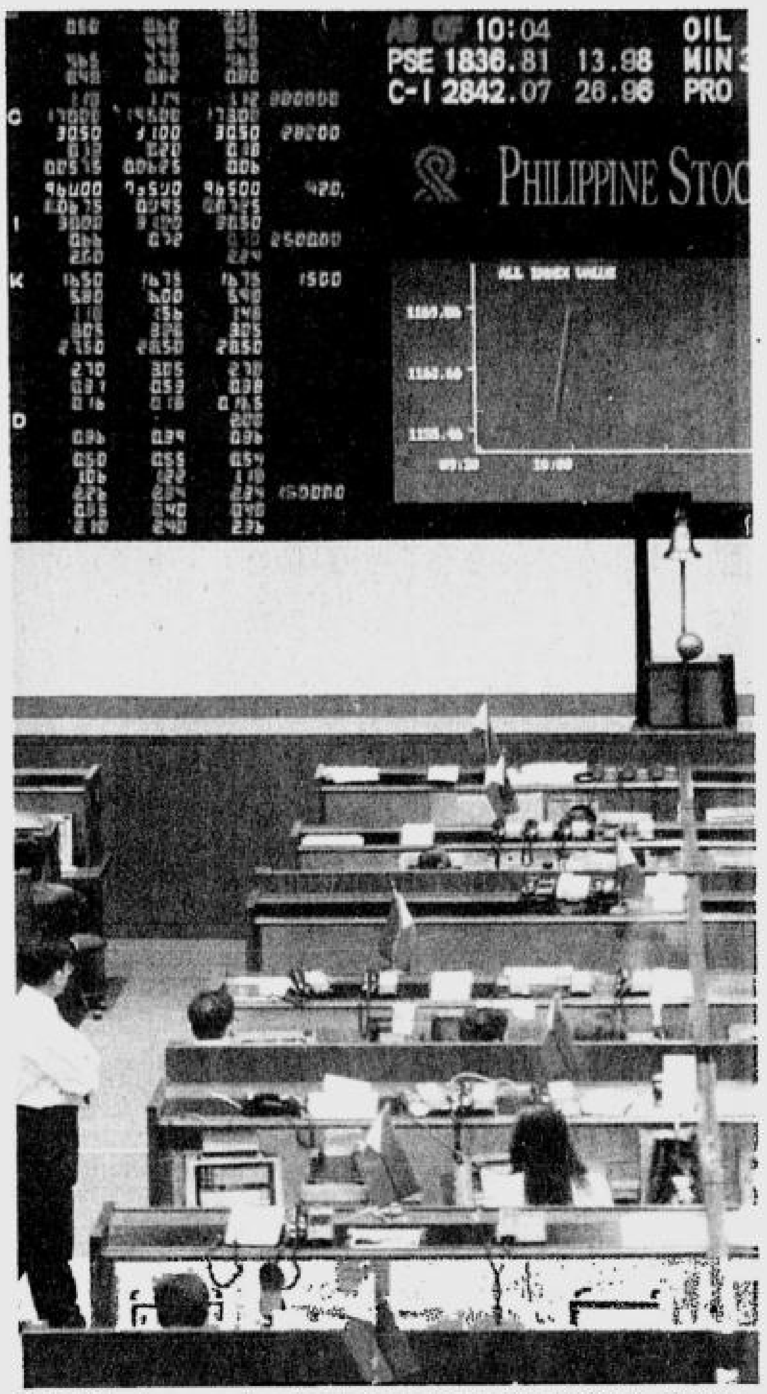
The six-month T-bill fetched 8.981 percent from only 8.877 percent in the last auction. The one-year debt note got 10.022 percent from only 9.884 percent, breaching what traders consider the psychological level of 10 percent.

Lasala said banks were still confronted with concerns over a possible credit-rating downgrade for the Philippines and the uncertainty over how inflation would behave early this year after reaching five-year highs in the last few months of 2004.

But the national treasurer said these concerns had already been considered in the pricing of bids in previous auctions. The behavior of the market during yesterday's auction was largely brought about by the fact that they were still getting the hang of the trading as 2005 has just started.

Lasala said banks were waiting for the US Federal Reserve to raise its policy rates anew and for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' possible move. The US Fed rate currently stands at 2.25 percent, after a series of increases by the

TREASURY/ B3

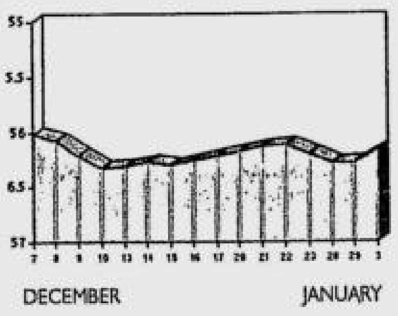


STOCK brokers monitor the trading screen at the Philippine Stocks Exchange. The stock market started 2005 with a bang as its shares rose 1.32 percent and closed at 1846.90. REUTERS

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱ 56.155 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 3, 2005

¥ 103.78 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2004

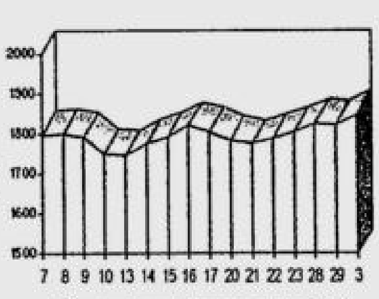
GOLD: $ 435.20-435.70
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 3, 2005

January 3, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.737626319	1	56.341
Japan	Yen	0.007194	0.009753	0.5495
United Kingdom	Pound	1.415726	1.9193	108.1353
Hongkong	Dollar	0.094914	0.128675	7.2497
Switzerland	Franc	0.647154	0.877347	49.4306
Canada	Dollar	0.614382	0.832917	46.9274
Singapore	Dollar	0.451783	0.612482	34.5078
Australia	Dollar	0.576901	0.782105	44.0646
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.956569	2.65252	149.4456
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.196669	0.266624	15.0219
Brunei	Dollar	0.450403	0.610612	34.4025
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.00008	0.000108	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.019026	0.025793	1.4532
UAE	Dirham	0.200846	0.272287	15.3409
Euro	Euro	1	1.3557	76.3815
Argentina	Peso	0.248443	0.336814	18.9764
Brazil	REAL	0.277825	0.376648	21.2207
Denmark	Kroner	0.134508	0.182352	10.2739
India	Rupee	0.017047	0.023111	1.3021
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.194138	0.263193	14.8286
Mexico	New Peso	0.066274	0.089847	5.0621
New Zealand	Dollar	0.531546	0.720617	40.6003
Norway	Kroner	0.121356	0.164522	9.2693
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012422	0.016841	0.9488
South Africa	Rand	0.131017	0.17762	10.0073
Korea	Won	0.000713	0.000966	0.0544
Sweden	Kroner	0.110878	0.150317	8.469
Syria	Pound	0.01421	0.019264	1.0854
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.02324	0.031506	1.7751
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000385	0.000522	0.0294

STOCK MARKET

Stock end higher on gains in blue chips

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B3)

SHARES closed higher yesterday as investors picked up blue chips after the extended New Year holiday, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index climbed 24.07 points, or 1.3 percent, to 1,846.90, after sliding 3.15 points to 1,822.83 on Wednesday, the last trading day for 2004.

The Philippine stock market had gained 26 percent year-on-year, making the Manila bourse one of the best performers in Asia.

Leading advancers were blue chips Ayala Corp., ending up 4.6 percent at P6.90. Globe Telecom rose 1.1 percent to P965 , SM Prime Holdings gained 1.3 percent to P7.80, while Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. advanced 2.2 percent to P1,390.

"Investors are positioning behind blue chips as the best bets for 2005. They are gravitating to sure stocks that will provide growth but will insulate them from shocks," said Mark Alan Canizares, an investment analyst at CitisecOnline.com.

Astro del Castillo, managing director at First Grade Holdings, said the pent up demand for equities as a result of the extended holidays underpinned the stock market's gain yesterday.

He said that President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to call Congress to a special session this week to pass needed tax reform legislation also spurred investor sentiment.

Lepanto Mining shares surged on news that Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. of Canada has granted the Philippine mining company a $3-million (euro2.2 million) loan in exchange for an option to buy into the local company's mining claim.

Lepanto's widely traded B shares surged around 16 percent to P0.52, while its A shares that are exclusive to local investors rose 9.8 percent to close at P0.45.

AP

MWCI seen to post P2B in income

THE AYALA Group's Manila Water Company Inc. said it made more than P2 billion in net income last year.

This was the result of the aggressive expansion of MWCI's service area to cover one million more people served during the year, according to MWCI chief finance officer Sherisa Nuesa .

"We may even have exceeded the P2-billion mark and this would be very significant for our initial public offering during the first quarter of this year," Nuesa told the Inquirer.

Since it started operations, MWCI has been posting aggressive growth rates. The company posted a net income of P1.2 billion in 2003 or more than double the 2002 figure.

MWCI has tapped two underwriters, Union Bank of Switzerland and the Bank of Philippine Islands, for its plan to issue P4 billion worth of shares to the public.

"Our intent to go public in the first quarter of year 2005 has generated interest in the international market and we will issue some of the shares there," Nuesa said.

MWCI expects to raise $75 million from the IPO but the figure could still vary depending on market conditions. Manila's east concessionaire has tapped ING and BPI Capital as its financial advisers.

Proceeds from the offering will largely go to the expansion of water service coverage, non-revenue water reduction program and the development of new water resources.

The IPO is part of MWCI's 25-year concession agreement with the Metropolitan Water Sewerage System (MWSS). The company supplies water to the east zone comprised by Marikina, Pasig, Mandaluyong and Makati, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig and Pateros and a portion of Manila.

Christine A. Gaylican

State firms remit ₱5.1B in dividends to government

STATE-OWNED companies remitted to the national government P5.1 billion in dividends last year.

According to the 2004 accomplishment report of the Department of Finance, the P5.1 billion contributed by government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs) was much higher than the P2.5-billion target set by the DOF for the year.

The dividend collection for 2004, however, was lower than the P5.32 billion recorded in 2003 and the P7.496 billion in 2002.

The top five dividend contributors last year are: the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), P750 million; Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), P600 million; Manila International Airport Authority P231.49 million; Philippine Economic Zone Authority, P220 million; and Philippine Ports Authority, P187.65 million.

STATE/ B3

SBMA execs expect bright year ahead for Subic freeport

By Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Officials of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority are seeing brighter business prospects for this freeport this year with the entry of new investments that will generate revenue for and create much-needed jobs in Central Luzon.

In a recent meeting of the SBMA board, SBMA Chair Francisco Licuanan III said he would welcome the new year with "high hopes and greater expectations" as he was also anticipating a challenging year ahead.

"The SBMA board has expressed strong optimism that economic growth will be achieved this year in the freeport zone. To entice more investments, the board agreed to refine the processes to make the SBMA an excellent customer-oriented office," Licuanan said in a statement.

He said the board discussed key issues on investments, including the development plans and programs for the Subic-Clark Alliance for Development (SCAD).

SBMA Administrator Alfredo Antonio said four Taiwanese manufacturing firms with combined fresh investments of more than $28 million (about P1.6 billion) would set up production plants this January at the Subic Bay Industrial Park.

These companies are the Taiwan Pao An Industrial ($20 million), Coin Chemical Industrial ($2 million), Hua Fuh Plastics ($3.12 million) and Wood Center of Asia ($3.8 million).

Antonio said certain Japanese firms —including computer micro-motor maker Nidec,and automated teller machine (ATM) manufacturer Top Mechatronic Corp. (Subic)—were planning expansion programs for this year. "The opening of

SBMA/ B2

EUPHORIA DYING DOWN

Mining industry buckles down to work

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FEATURE

NOW that the local mining industry was given a respite, people should realize there is a lot more to be done before we see the mineral fields buzzing with activity.

This is what Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, would tell everybody if he could talk to all concerned— be they mining investors, government policy makers or environmentalists.

While the Supreme Court ruled on Dec. 1, 2004 that foreigners were, after all, allowed to take part in mineral exploration, Romualdez says it will take time to revitalize the industry.

Incubation period

He says the gestation period for a sizeable project—from prospecting to actual mining—takes about six or seven years and that the High Court's decision practically ushers in mining firms to start incubating their ventures.

"While capital infusion in the industry reached its highest levels at P3.7 billion (in the five years) after the enactment of the Mining Act in 1995, the amount had gone down significantly to only P360 million in 2002,"

Of course, everything went to a halt when the Supreme Court issued in early 2004 a decision stating that foreigners could not take part in local mining, which it reversed last month.

During a roundtable discussion with the INQUIRER's business editors and reporters, the CMP chief evoked a mix of frustration and excitement for a country so richly endowed with minerals.

Driver of growth

According to CMP data, the Philippines ranks second in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of mineral resources.

The country is "prospective" in terms of deposits of copper, gold, nickel, chromite, and other metallic and non-metallic minerals.

"For almost 10 years now, the mining industry has been saddled with a lot of problems related to the implementation of various laws, which dragged the execution of regulations concerning minerals development," Romualdez says.

So why push for mining and mineral resource development now? Romualdez readily dishes out three reasons:

- to take advantage of higher market prices metals are fetching in the global market;
- to take advantage of China's huge demand for minerals in terms of market and investments, and
- mineral resource development can be the main driver of the country's economic growth at the present economic circumstances.

Multiplier effects

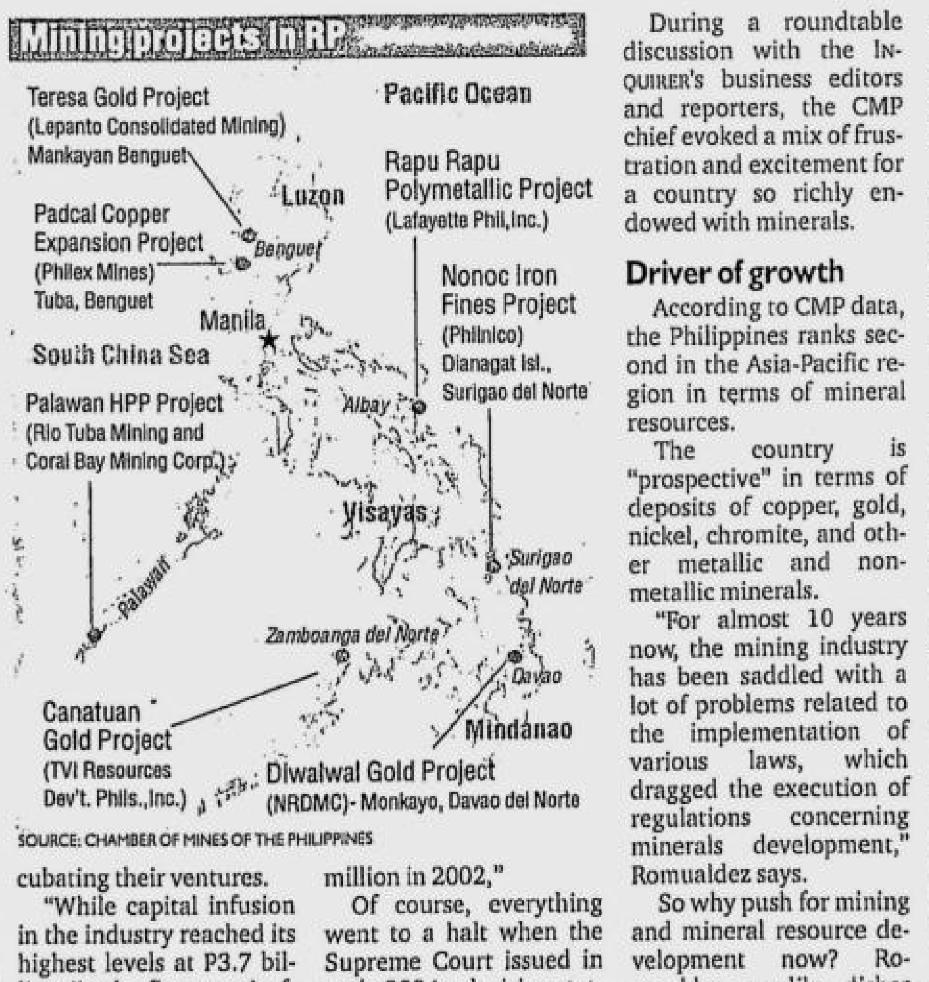
Mining has a multiplier effect of six times, Romualdez says. At a potential value-added of P300 billion yearly, mining can result in an incremental activity worth P1.8 trillion or about 35 percent of all merchandise produced and service rendered in the country for a year.

In 2003, the mining industry paid a total of P2 billion in taxes and fees and employed about 104,000 workers plus about 400,000 to a million allied jobs in the upstream and downstream sectors.

Aside from that, mining operations are mostly in difficult and remote terrain, and are usually in rebel-infested areas. "It

MINING/ B2

Mining projects in RP



SOURCE: CHAMBER OF MINES OF THE PHILIPPINES

Black ship

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

IT'S an entirely differently year.

Naturally, the spin doctors of this cute administration of Gloriaetta must spin for us whatever it is they are paid for to spin.

It could be anything, it could even be a lie. Anyway, on the first working day of the year, they tell us that the Palace will do everything to stop corruption. Honest.

By the way, they also said the same thing at the start of last year. And the previous year! And also the one before that!

And they still harbor hurt feelings whenever some loudmouths in business say that this country is lagging behind here in Asia—in almost everything.

Look, three strong typhoons hit us recently, killing hundreds of people and rendering thousands homeless. We are still trying to bring relief goods to the victims.

Then all of a sudden, the whole world turned its attention to other parts of Asia for what is called history's worst natural disaster.

We can't even compete in calamities.

* * *

THIS year, things should look up for Nenaco, or the Negros Navigation Co., the ailing domestic shipping business, burdened by some P2.5 billion in debt.

After only two short months into its court-approved rehabilitation, financed with P250 million in cash from its stockholders, Nenaco now expects to turn around within the year. Hopefully.

That should be good news to Nenaco's creditors.

They are the same guys who were ready to pounce on the shipping company, but who were forced to go along with the court-ordered rehabilitation.

But from what I gathered, something is hampering the Nenaco rehabilitation. The management cannot get rid of a gang of foreigners who have been milking the company all along.

Actually, those foreigners bagged some lucrative contracts with Nenaco a few years ago, when the company was still being run by —guess who—also some foreigners.

The contract covered certain services aboard the Nenaco vessels.

Word goes around that the gang of foreigners launched a campaign to malign the new management.

The gang also has become, er, "friendly" with the courts.

***

STILL ailing, Nenaco is trying to cancel some bad contracts, which were done by the previous management.

The contract review is part of the court-ordered rehabilitation.

Well, maybe the court also learned about what has become common knowledge in the company itself.

And that is, the contracts were done with a little help from this negotiating technique known as "arm-twisting" and "blackmail."

The gang of foreigners is said to own, individually, some "fun" establishments in Ermita, Manila, which has been famous for a long time now for "fun" establishments owned by gangs of foreigners.

And word goes around the creditor-banks of Nenaco that, as a gesture of kindness toward Nenaco, and thus its various creditors, the judge in the company's rehabilitation case asked the Nenaco management to maintain the contracts of the foreign gang.

The judge might have had a personal reason for his making such an extraordinary request on Nenaco.

It's just that nobody in the company and even in its creditor-banks know what it is exactly.

It was never put in black and white, of course, and so maybe the judge is really just friendly to all foreign gangs here.

***

ANYWAY, before the court-ordered rehab which started only last October, only three of Nenaco's nine vessels were running.

Its owner, the Metro Pacific group of Manny Pangilinan, who has turned PLDT into a money-making machine in less than five years, decided to infuse P250 million as fresh capital into the shipping company.

Thus, with the cash infusion, eight of the nine vessels immediately went into operation.

As of last Dec. 19, based on a Nenaco report to creditors, all nine vessels were running.

That's why the creditors were glad to hear from the company that it could expect to turn around this year, until of course the problem over those horrific contracts comes up, together with the explainable "friendliness" of the court with the foreign gangs.

You know what? The gangs even succeeded in getting rid of the new president of Nenaco, who was appointed by the court.

The gangsters simply got an order to that effect from the same court which appointed the poor guy. That kind of "friendly!"

***

AND so the contracts of Nenaco with those gangs continue to bleed the company, and the creditor-banks could not even do anything about it, thanks mainly to the fact that the "friendly" court obtained complete jurisdiction over the business. Nice!

The gangsters actually hold contracts for the cleaning of the Nenaco vessels. Fine! It's just that, under the same contracts, Nenaco must provide the gangsters all the cleaning supplies, including the equipment.

The same gangsters, by the way, when they were still trying to secure the contracts, declared to Nenaco that they had the know-how, the resources, the capability and the experience to provide hotel services. Like they were God's gift to house cleaning or something!

Anyway, under the contracts, Nenaco must also buy insurance (namely, marine, war, protection and indemnity risks) for the employees of…well, the gangsters themselves.

The shipping company must continue to pay the gangsters a little amount of only P 3.3 million (net) every month, whether or not the Nenaco vessels are running, meaning whether the gangsters are doing work or just scratching their…whatever it is they scratch when they are not doing anything.

Now, from what I gathered, the foreign gangs used a dummy for the contracts.

Paging the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation!

Thrift banks step up home lending

By Doris C. Dumlao

THRIFT banks have stepped up lending to individuals out to buy their own houses.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported that as of end-June 2004, thrift banks' real estate loans hit P48 billion, up 1.8 percent from the end-March level, and by 9.7 percent from the previous year's level.

About 72 percent of these loans, or P34.5 billion, went to the purchase of residential units by individual homeowners.

The rest was used to finance the construction and development of real estate property for commercial use, including infrastructure projects.

Despite the increased lending to the volatile sector, the level of the thrift banks' past-due real estate loans to total real estate loans improved by 1.3 percentage points to 14.9 percent, from 16.2 percent the previous quarter and by 1.4 percentage points from 16.3 the previous year.

Real estate loans accounted for 21.1 percent of the thrift banks' combined loan and investment portfolio, down from 21.7 percent the previous quarter.

Pacific Mining sells 12.7% Lepanto stake

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CAYMAN ISLANDS-BASED Pacific Mining Limited has unloaded its 12.7-percent stake in Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. to pave the way for the entry of another foreign investor into one of the country's oldest mining firms, industry sources said.

The sources, however, could not confirm whether it was Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. that bought Pacific mining's stake last December 28, when 2.7 billion Lepanto B shares changed hands at 45 centavos a share.

Pacific Mining's interest is equivalent to one board seat.

The Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. group of veteran banker George Ty was also rumored to have bought the shares, but sources said the group had no intentions yet of increasing its shares beyond the equivalent of three board seats.

In a related development, Lepanto told the Philippine Stock Exchange that it has signed a loan and priority negotiation right agreement with Ivanhoe.

Under the agreement, Lepanto will grant Ivanhoe first crack at negotiations concerning ownership of Lepanto in any mine project.

Ivanhoe will also extend to Lepanto a 180-day loan worth $3 million at 3 percent interest a year, according to Odette Javier, Lepanto assistant corporate secretary.

Ivanhoe recently met with mining executives of the Lepanto Group and agreed to conduct a due diligence study on Lepanto's mining assets.

This was encouraged by the recent Supreme Court ruling that lifted restrictions on foreign ownership in mining projects.

"I am excited to look at investment opportunities here in the Philippines and meet with government," Ivanhoe Mines chair and founder Robert Friedland had said through an associate of Lepanto chair Felipe Yap.

Ivanhoe was in talks with the Lepanto group sometime in the late 1990s to invest some $350 to $500 million in a mining project in Benguet.

Talks fell through, however, due to legal restrictions on foreign ownership.

Ivanhoe is one of the more aggressive mining companies and has firmly set its sights on the development of new prospects.

Mining industry buckles down to work

From page B1

can help in reducing insurgency and in decongesting cities."

Romualdez says mining operations provide the benefits to rural communities and indigenous peoples: construction of roads, bridges and other infrastructure support; development of housing; establishment of schools, hospitals and health services; provision of communication and recreational facilities; reforestation and other environmental protection activities, and other services needed in the development of towns.

Unfortunately, he says the industry has been hounded by the negative tendencies of nationalists and civic movements.

Romualdez, who has a master's degree in history, says the notion that bars foreigners from exploiting local mineral resources was relatively new. "When we were a colony of Spain, the Spaniards owned the mines but they hardly developed mining. In the time of the Americans, Americans enjoyed equal rights with Filipinos but it was then that our mining industry boomed."

Environmentalism

When parity rights expired in the mid-1970s and environmentalism and the civic movement grew strong, mining investments had to face more and more legal restraints and unfavorable public image.

"Things got worse after the Marcopper incident [when mine tailings contaminated waters and farmlands]," Romualdez said. "Nobody stood up to say that not all mining operations are like that."

Presently, while the industry tries to disentangle itself from a gamut of legal and policy concerns, Romualdez said it had also taken up the task of making itself more acceptable to the public.

For one, mining firms are now making the effort to internalize corporate social responsibility and the Minerals Code of Conduct for the Environment in their operations.

"While there are government and multilateral efforts on the advocacy of CSR and environmental and social responsibilities among mining companies, the industry wants to come up with CSR standards and social indicators that measure the outcome of CSR activities," Romualdez says.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Monday January 3, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	100,000
Banco De Oro Univ. Bank	27	27.5	27	27.5	383,800
Bank Of The Phil. Islands	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	161,800
Export And Ind. Bank Inc	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	300,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	24,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	26.5	26	26	240,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	200
Security Bank Corp.	29.5	29.5	29	29	15,000
Union Bank Of The Phil.	23.75	24	23.5	23.5	31,600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Atr Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	295,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2545	2560	2545	2560	700
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1850	1880	1850	1880	1,180
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	18.5	18.5	18.25	18.25	17,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.74	2,856,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	955	965	955	965	15,350
Ipeople Inc	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	20,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.65	7,469,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1380	1395	1380	1390	192,950
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.64	6,690,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	56,800,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.5	15.75	15.5	15.75	5,400
Manila Electric Co. B	24.75	25.5	24.75	25.5	135,200
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.2	23,000
Transportation Services					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5,111,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	2	2	2	2	1,290,000
Food Beverages & Tobacco					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4	4	4	4	9,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27.5	28.5	27.5	28.5	42,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58.5	59	58	59	21,900
San Miguel Corp. B	75	75	75	75	305,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	250,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.9	9,493,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	139,000
Alliance Global Group Inc	11	11	11	11	4,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	101,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	16	16	16	16	8,600
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.68	0.7	0.68	0.7	3,210,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	390,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.7	3.7	655,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1.02	1	1.02	78,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.7	262,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	30.5	31	30.5	30.5	267,000
House Of Investments Inc.	0.7	0.72	0.7	0.72	350,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	22,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.34	2.44	2.26	2.44	1,751,000
Medco Holdings	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.22	1.24	480,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.37	0.33	0.36	34,920,000
Polar Property Holdings	2	2	2	2	10,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	50,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	450,000
MANUFACTURING DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.6	106,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	20,000
HOTEL RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	1,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.96	1.02	0.96	1	610,000
BONDS PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
Abs-Cbn Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	18.25	18.75	18.25	18.5	22,600
Macroasia Corp. Warrants	0.145	0.165	0.145	0.165	600,000
Pldt (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,000
Pldt (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,100
Pldt 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,400
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.3	7.5	7.2	7.5	15,903,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.55	70,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.245	0.26	0.245	0.26	2,810,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	50,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	1,830,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.12	1.14	1.1	1.1	2,524,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	750,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	850,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	4,975,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.4	0.48	0.4	0.47	1,490,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.44	0.48	0.44	0.48	710,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	287,600,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.95	4.6	3.95	4.4	719,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.65	3.7	3.65	3.7	52,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.45	105,650,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.46	0.53	0.46	0.52	73,910,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.022	0.019	0.022	862,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.028	0.026	0.028	416,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0046	0.005	0.0046	0.005	249,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.78	0.87	0.78	0.86	6,180,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.8	0.91	0.8	0.89	6,070,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.2	0.215	0.2	0.215	950,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	10,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	1,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.045	0.045	0.044	0.044	5,800,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	100,000

DISCLOSURES

BANCO De Oro Universal Bank confirmed that it has requested the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for authority to issue long- term negotiable certificates of deposits worth up to P5 billion, with a term of five years and one day.

* * *

METRO Pacific Corp. sold a portion of its shares in Prime Media Holdings Inc., comprising 34 percent of the outstanding common shares, to Alcion Resources Inc. for P2.5 million.

* * *

FLS INDUSTRIES A/S sold 595,675 of its shares of stock in Atlas Cement Corp. to Bacnotan Consolidated Industries Inc. for $3.24 million.

* * *

ERIBERTO Gesalta, a sector head of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., sold 406 shares at P1,350 each ***Compiled by: D.J. Yap, PDI Research***

SBMA execs expect . . .

From page B1

new factories, as well as the expansion programs of our investors, would mean more jobs that would surely uplift the local economy of our neighboring communities and further improve the living standards for residents of Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga and Olongapo City," Antonio said.

Last October, Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said an investment mission to Taiwan was able to clinch five business deals worth a total of $45 million—all of which would locate in Subic.

Purisima said the deals represented projects that would generate between $96 million and $120 million in exports and create 2,610 new jobs.

He said projects that were finalized during the Taiwan mission involved a manufacturing facility of paint and lithium-ion batteries; a manufacturing plant for digital and analog telecommunications switching systems for export to China and Taiwan; a leading Taiwan abrasives producer locating most of its production in Subic; and a main supplier of compact discs and digital video discs.

Last month, officials of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office said the inflow of direct investments from Taiwan was expected to reach at least $50 million in 2004, up by 7.6 percent compared to the $46.4 million that came in 2003.

Two-way trade is also seen to improve as this has reached $5.2 billion in the first nine months of 2004, just a little below the $5.38 billion posted for the entire 2003. *With a report from Ronnel W. Domingo*

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2004 Sienna Red,
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BMW 318i Ed.
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2004 Black Sapphire,
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BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Titanium Silver,
13,000km, P2,100,000

BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Black Sapphire,
5,000km, P2,150,000

BMW 318i Sport
2004 Titanium Silver,
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BMW 325i Exec.
2003 Titanium Silver,
12,600km, P2,550,000

BMW 325i Exec.
2004 Titanium Silver,
17,900km, P2,590,000

BMW 318i Sport
2004 Topaz Blue,
2,500km, P2,600,000

BMW 325i M Sport
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Certification woes hamper halal exports

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE CONFUSION among food exporters over proper halal certification is limiting the country's access to the $150-billion-a-year industry, according to a local Muslim group.

Abdul Rahman RT Linzag, president of the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP), said that Muslim countries only accept imported products that are halal-certified by organizations accredited with the Jakarta-based World Halal Council.

"Right now, the IDCP is the only Philippine organization accredited by the WHC," he said.

"Unfortunately, many exporters do not know this and thus have their products 'certified' by unqualified agencies," he added.

This was one of the reasons why the United Arab Emirates rejected in March last year shipments of Philippine-made products when authorities found out these were not certified by the proper agencies.

Linzag explained that halal is an Arabic word which can generally be translated as "permissible" or "allowed."

The term halal is popularly known to refer to consumables or products used by Muslims, but it is also applied to relationships; clothing and manner; social and business transaction, trade and financial services; investments; and everything else related to Muslim life.

Local firms trying to tap the halal market include big names such as RFM Corp., San Miguel Corp. and Universal Robina Corp.

Linzag said exporters posted a total of $50 million in receipts from halal food sales in 2004, a decline from previous years.

Linzag, however, said there was no accurate way of measuring the exporters' performance due to the confusion over which entity should be certifying products as halal.

"The Supreme Court ruled on July 9, 2003, that halal-certifying agencies should not be part of the government but should be religious organizations similar to the IDCP," Linzag said.

RP requires P2.7T to develop energy sector in next 10 years

By Abigail L. Ho

A CYLINDER of cooking gas: P380. A liter of diesel fuel: P23.45. A month's electricity bill (for a consumption of around 400 kilowatt-hours): P3,400.

A decade of having adequate energy supply: about P2.7 trillion.

That's how much is needed to develop the energy sector over the next 10 years, according to the Department of Energy's updated Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) covering 2005-2014.

Coal, geothermal, hydropower, biomass, solar, wind, oil and gas exploration, research and development need around P1.1 trillion in investments during that 10-year period.

Upstream oil and gas require the biggest investment in exploration, research and development aspect during the period at P488.6 billion.

Hydropower development comes next at P304.7 billion.

For coal, the country needs P78.4 billion in investments from 2005 to 2009, and another P84 billion from 2010 to 2014, for a total of P162.4 billion.

Harnessing the country's geothermal power potential comes at a price of P78.8 billion, while developing biomass, solar and wind resources for power generation needs an investment of P67.3 billion in the 10-year period.

In the downstream sector, some P1 trillion in investments is needed from 2005 to 2014 to finance oil, natural gas and energy efficiency projects.

Natural gas requires the highest investment in the downstream sector at P822.8 billion in the next 10 years.

Energy efficiency projects will need an infusion of P152.3 billion, while downstream oil will need an investment of P28.6 billion from 2005 to 2014.

For the power sector, some P560.9 billion in new investments will have to be infused in the next 10 years to bankroll main grid, small island grid and electrification requirements.

The main grid alone will need P535.6 billion in new infusions.

The small island grid will require P18.4 billion, while electrification projects will need an additional P6.9 billion.

Looking at the huge investment figures and the seemingly sorry state of the Philippine economy, the energy sector's development is hinged on the entry of entities that have enough courage to infuse their hard-earned cash into this capital-intensive sector.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a fiscal crisis does not serve as much of an encouragement. But the government, both the executive and the legislative, are exerting much effort to bring the cash into the local energy industry.

For example, to help encourage investors to infuse cash into the local energy sector, the DOE and even the two houses of Congress are pushing various measures that will provide all sorts of perks to these prospective investors.

New infusions will not only ensure an adequate supply of energy to the country in the next 10 years, these will likewise help the country achieve at least 60-percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010, as mandated by Ms Arroyo.

At the House of Representatives alone, bills supporting the government's thrust to propel the country toward energy self-sufficiency are now being aggressively pushed.

House committee on energy chair and Lanao del Norte Rep. Alipio Cirilo Badelles said particular focus would be given to bills concerning renewable energy, ethanol use and natural gas use.

The ethanol bill, if passed, would ease the country's dependence on imported oil, he said.

He said the Renewable Energy Bill would likely encounter some problems.

"There's a concern that the incentives contained in that bill are over-ambitious, especially at a time when we're trying to rationalize incentives," he said.

The bill aims to provide an institutional framework and infrastructure that will encourage potential investors to commercially develop the country's indigenous energy resources, including wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, ocean and biomass.

He, however, said that it was crucial for the government to pursue the development of these alternative sources of energy.

"Unless the Philippines is able to harness its under-utilized indigenous energy resources, the country will continue to be highly dependent on imported energy fuel," he said.

Perez, Purisima named top performers

SECRETARIES Vincent Perez Jr. and Cesar Purisima of the Departments of Energy and Trade and Industry, respectively, were named the top performers in the Arroyo Cabinet in a survey among businessmen.

Some 291 business executives took part in the survey conducted by the business groups from Dec. 8 to 15 last year.

The respondents came from the American Chamber of Commerce, the Australia-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the European Chamber of Commerce, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, the Makati Business Club and the Management Association of the Philippines.

PEREZ

PURISIMA

The year-end survey was conducted to assess President Macapagal-Arroyo's first six months in office following her election last May.

The groups said Perez, Purisima and Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman were doing well in their respective posts.

The business groups said majority of the respondents were Filipinos (69.1 percent) and from top management (83.8 percent).

Some 62.2 percent of the respondents were from the services sector, while 22.7 percent came from the manufacturing sector.

The respondents cited the market-based reforms in the power sector initiated by Perez and the ongoing privatization of the National Power Corp. (Napocor).

The groups also cited Purisima's efforts to promote and strengthen small and medium enterprises to propel the country's economic growth.

They also recognized the "quiet but effective leadership" of Soliman in the government's fight against poverty.

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PNOC seeks financial adviser

THE PHILIPPINE National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. is inviting qualified companies to bid for the contract to become its financial advisor.

The privatization committee of PNOC-EDC said in a recently issued bid notice that prospective financial advisors should have experience in privatizing power sector assets worth at least $500 million.

PNOC-EDC will be floating 6 billion shares for private placement to help it raise enough cash to bid for the National Power Corp.'s geothermal assets to be placed on the auction block in August.

PNOC-EDC said the prospective financial advisor should also have a track record in working with the government, particularly the Department of Finance and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, as well as some government-owned or -controlled corporations and government financial institutions.

The company should likewise have an established working relationship with PNOC-EDC, its parent firm PNOC or any of the entities under the PNOC umbrella, including the PNOC Exploration Corp., PNOC Development and Management Corp., PNOC Shipping and Transport Corp., PNOC Petrochemical Development Corp. and PNOC Coal Corp.

The firm should also have adequate experience in lead-managing public equity offerings as well as arranging equity sales both within Asia and globally.

It should likewise have a representative office in the country and an explicit commitment to deploy in the country a dedicated team with adequate experience in power, and geothermal energy in particular.

Eligibility forms can be secured at the PNOC-EDC headquarters starting Friday. The deadline for submission of the accomplished forms has been scheduled for Jan. 14, with eligible bidders to be notified the week after.

Paul Aquino, PNOC-EDC president, explained in an earlier interview that the firm would be following the privatization model of Petron Corp., where the government retained a 40-percent stake in the oil firm, while giving up 40 percent to Saudi Aramco and 20 percent to the public through an initial public offering (IPO).

The government, through PNOC-EDC parent firm PNOC, held 10 billion shares in PNOC-EDC.

The PNOC board recently granted PNOC-EDC the authority to boost these existing shares to 15 billion through the issuance of 5 billion new shares.

PNOC would also be selling 4 billion of its existing shares. *Abigail L. Ho*

Treasury bill rates . . .

From page B1

Federal Open Market Committee, and is expected to further rise to 4 percent this year.

While the BSP had kept its own policy rates steady, banks said the central bank might be forced to already raise its rates the next time the US Fed rates were raised. The BSP's overnight borrowing rate is at 6.75 percent, while its overnight lending rate is at 9 percent.

An increase in US interest rates usually prompts local monetary authorities to also adjust the domestic interest rates.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, however, said yesterday it might be possible to continue deferring any hike in interest rates this month despite pressures from high oil prices and the narrowing of spread between local and US interest rates.

"We'll hold off for as long as we can," Buenaventura said. "Interest rate differentials have remained comfortable."

Over the last few weeks, global oil prices have pulled back, helping perk up the US stock markets.

But Buenaventura said the advisory committee of the Monetary Board would still meet on the matter Tuesday next week.

"We've asked the (BSP's) economic research (department) to see if there are second-round inflationary effects," he said, referring to the spillover impact of high oil prices on wages, utility and transport fares.

"We want them to see if the situation warrants tightening now," he said. *With a report from Doris C. Dumlao*

State firms remit . . .

From page B1

According to a finance official, the decline in the dividends remitted by GOCCs and GFIs to the national government could be attributed to the more difficult times experienced by state-owned companies last year.

Under Republic Act No. 7656 (Dividend Law), state-owned companies are required to remit at least 50 percent of their incomes to the national government. The dividends are placed in the state coffers, managed by the Bureau of Treasury, and form part of government revenue. *Michelle V. Remo*

Rx MEDICard Take Charge Doc!
Dr. Nicky S. Montoya

Take Charge Doc! is your weekly question and answer guide on general health issues and illnesses. MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. And in a common thrust with the campaigns of the government, Take Charge Doc! parallels its features on the Calendar of Health Events of the Department of Health.

What is Cancer?

Cancer is a group of many related diseases that begin in cells, the body's basic unit of life. Normally, cells grow and divide to produce more cells only when the body needs them. This orderly process helps keep the body healthy.

Sometimes, cells keep dividing when new cells are not needed. These extra cells form a mass of tissue, called a tumor, which can be either benign or malignant. Malignant tumors are cancer cells. Cells in these tumors are abnormal and divide without control or order. They can invade and damage nearby tissues and organs. They can also spread to form new tumors in other organs of the body.

This week's answer to the question on cancer is courtesy of Dr. Tommy U. Reyes, our accredited Oncologist at the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital (OLLH) in Sta. Mesa, Manila. Dr. Reyes joined MEDICard in 1999 but has been in practice of his profession for over 11 years now. He is a Medicine graduate of the University of Santo Tomas. In 1988, he took his residency training for a specialization in Internal Medicine followed by subspecialty residency in Oncology at the Philippine General Hospital. Dr. Reyes is a Fellow and Diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians and the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology. For consultations, members may visit his clinic at OLLH, Room 429, Mondays to Fridays, from 9 AM to 12 noon.

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MasterCard congratulates winners of card promotion

MASTERCARD International announced the three lucky winners of the Equitable Travel MasterCard Card-Star Cruises promotion. Each winner walked away with a travel package on board the Star Cruises Superstar Virgo luxury liner.

The promotion, which ran over a period of six months, was exclusive to Equitable Travel Card MasterCard cardholders. Every P1,000 purchase with their MasterCard credit card entitled an Equitable Travel MasterCard cardholder to one raffle entry.

The three winners were randomly selected during the raffle draw held at the Equitable Card Center in Makati City. The winners were: Maria Luz A. Alicer, Elizabeth Herrera, and Lanee C. David. Each winner received a Star Cruises "Be Our Guest" voucher, which entitled two individuals to a cruise trip inclusive of meals and beverages.

"We had initiated the Star Cruises promotion simultaneously with the launch of the Equitable Travel MasterCard Card early this year to deliver the message that our new payment card program had the most comprehensive features and benefits for travelers," said Fol Rana, vice president for card sales and marketing, retail, of Equitable Card Network.

"We are delighted to have had this opportunity to collaborate with Equitable Card network and Star Cruises in providing our MasterCard cardholders a chance to win a luxurious cruise trip," said Jose Rene Villa-Real, vice president and country manager, Philippines, MasterCard International. "As part of our continuous drive to provide our cardholders priceless experiences, we look forward to introducing new and unique promotions for them to enjoy."

One of the winners, Alicer, who runs a recruitment agency, said, "I enjoy using my MasterCard card as it provides me the global acceptance and convenience when I travel. The Equitable Travel MasterCard card bills me in dollars, so I do not need to worry about the currency conversion or add-on exchange rates."

The Equitable Travel MasterCard Card has a unique dual-currency feature that gives cardholders two separate credit limits, both in Peso and US dollar, giving cardholders greater purchasing power and convenience of paying their transactions in either of these denominations. Other unique features of the MasterCard card include: earning one Travel E-Point with a minimum of P40 transaction; automatic insurance coverage for cardholders who use their Equitable Travel Card to pay for their travel fares; lower interest charges; a two-year waiver of the annual fee; easy monthly installment plans; tavel-related rewards items; 24-hour customer service; online transactions and a host of other benefits.

LRMS HOLDS SEMINAR ON FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE FAMILY

'Liit Kita, Laki Gastos, Paano Budget?' is a seminar organized by Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila School (LRMS) together with the LRMS Parents' Assembly. The seminar held last Nov. 20, at the Preschool Building aims to provide helpful measures in stretching the family budget in the face of the economic crisis. Rene 'Rex' S.L. Resurreccion, owner of Passion for Perfection and instructor of the Certificate in Human Resource Development (CHRD) at the Human Resource Management Development Center (HRMDC) of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) facilitated the discussion. The seminar is the second installment of the 4 part series. The other two, 'Tsong Problemado Ka Rin?' and 'Understanding and Helping our Adolescents' are scheduled in December 2004 and February 2005 respectively. Shown are guest speaker Rene S.L. Resurreccion with the staff of Lorenzo de Manila School and Parents' Assembly, (front row, from left): Marian Rasay, Primary Coordinator; Thelma Fatalla, PA HS Division Secretary; Donato Tiu, PA president; Francis Teodoro Vicente, LRMS HRMD manager; (back row, from left): Rosalie Hartmann, Preschool principal; Dr. Clara Fuderanan, PA Committee on Education head; Lydia Vicente, LRMS president; Rene Resurreccion, guest speaker; Dr. Alda Bringas, Grade School principal.

THE COALITION AGAINST FAKE MEDICINES
dti
Pfizer

COALITION TO FIGHT FAKE MEDICINES

Government agencies and private institutions have joined forces and formed the 'Coalition Against Fake Medicines' to help fight and work for the eventual elimination of the problem. Following the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement, the Coalition vowed to help consumers to become more vigilant about counterfeits, encourage drugstores to sell legitimate medicines, embolden government agencies to enforce laws and help mobilize legislators to tighten laws on counterfeits. The coalition is composed of ten organizations, namely: the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Justice (DOJ), Philippine Medical Association (PMA), Drugstores Association of the Philippines (DSAP), Mercury Drug Corp, Zuellig Pharma Corp, GMA 7 Broadcast Network, Philippine Daily Inquirer and Pfizer Inc. Present during the MOA signing are (standing, from left): Manuel Quiogue, president, GMA 7 Network Inc; Celine Madamba, AVP - strategic marketing communications, Inquirer; Jack Concepcion, VP - merchandising, Mercury Drug Inc; Dr. Jose Sabill, vice president, Philippine Medical Association. Seated (from left) are: Celia Carlos, president, Drugstores Association of the Philippines; Norman Jocson, Assistant Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry; Manuel Dayrit, Secretary, Department of Health; Rey Gerardo Bacarro, president and country manager, Pfizer Inc; Macabangkit Lanto, Undersecretary, Department of Justice; and Michael Becker, president and CEO, Zuellig Pharma Corp.

An emerging community celebrates with art and wine

THE EMERGING Ayala Hillside Estates community recently enjoyed a Day of Art and Wine right at the scenic residential subdivision in Diliman, Quezon City.

At the event, lot owners arrived with friends and family and got to know future neighbors. Meanwhile, potential buyers enjoyed the scenic views of the 23-hectare development carved out from the original Capitol Hills Golf Course.

While interested clients inquired about the properties, some of the ladies gathered at a crafts workshop to listen to a representative from novelty shop Le Rosh demonstrate the art of ornamental flower arranging. Armed with a glue gun, the instructor demonstrated how to transform dried palay, multi-colored betel leaves, corn flowers and banaba leaves into attractive centerpieces.

Meanwhile, the children learned how to do figure drawing and colorful doodles from artist Clint Catalan of The Cubicle Art Gallery. The gallery also displayed multimedia pieces combining painting and everyday items such as a pincushion and a red tin. Throughout the day cheese and wine from Santi's Specialty Shop were served to guests and lot owners.

Riding golf carts, Ayala Land staff members showed the sights to all. An intimate and one-of-a-kind community, Ayala Hillside Estates is composed of a series of pocket neighborhoods connected by a main road. Each neighborhood is surrounded by golf fairways.

The casual and relaxing Day of Art and Wine served as a foretaste of the community lifestyle in Ayala Hillside Estates. Very soon, similar gatherings and other events are expected to be held more frequently and regularly in the community as the 3,000 sqm community center called the Day Garden will have been completed. Designed for daytime activities, it will have a swimming pool, basketball court, children's playground, palm court and pavilion.

Another 5,000 sqm. facility called the Evening Garden will be constructed in the subdivision's third phase. It will be the venue for night-time gatherings such as weddings, birthday parties, family reunions, and the like.

There are only a few lots still available in Ayala Hillside Estates Phases 1, 3A and 3B. For further inquiries about Ayala Hillside Estates, call our hotline at 848-5000, e-mail ayalasales@ayalaland.com.ph or visit www.ayalaland.com.ph.

VP NOLI ON 'TOK KO 'TO'

Vice President Noli 'Kabayan' De Castro, concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), recently guested in NBN-4's public service program, 'Tok Ko 'To' hosted by Sec. Ric Saludo. The Vice President discussed the housing thrusts and directions of the government shelter sector and also announced that the housing agencies led by the HUDCC, turned over a check last Dec. 20, in the amount of P3.4 million, to Gawad Kalinga to be used for the construction of the houses of flood victims. Appearing with the Vice President is Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman.

McDonald's and the

2004 WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY AT MCDONALD'S

This year's World Children's Day has over 30,000 McDonald's restaurants in 120 countries worldwide gearing up for its annual global celebration. In the Philippines, the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), McDonald's Philippines charity arm, works in partnership with the Kapisanan ng mga Broadcasters sa Pilipinas (KBP), to help promote widespread media awareness of the said event across the country. For inquiries, on how to become a partner of the RMHC, please call Butch Salaya at 815-4708. Shown during the signing of MOA between RMHC, McDonald's charitable arm and KBP for media awareness of forthcoming 2004 World Children's Day global celebration are KBP president Rey Langit, TV and movie actress Boots Anson Roa, RMHC manager Butch Salaya and PR and communications manager Zonito Torrevillas.

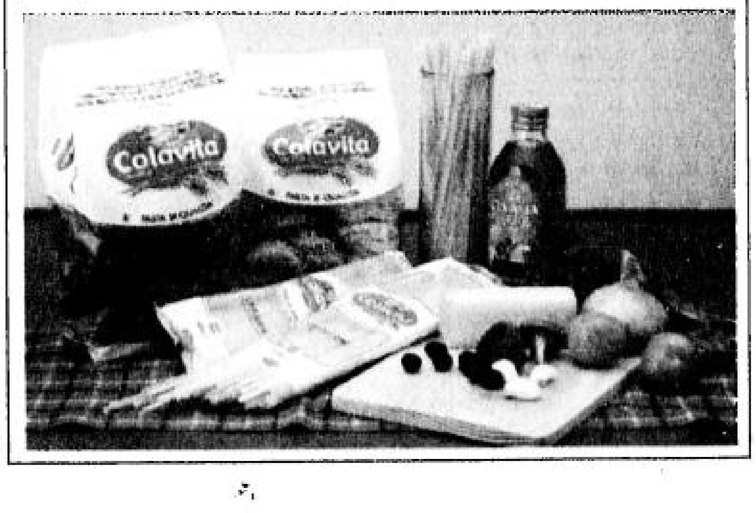
ProductFILES

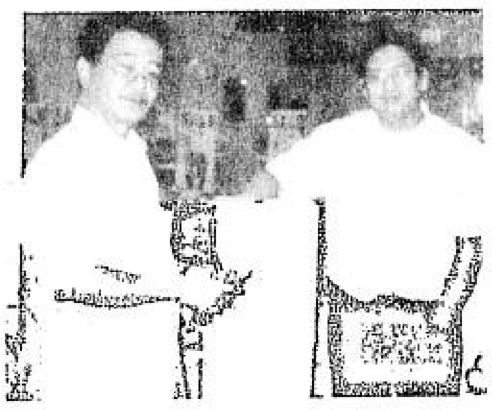
The 'No. 1 Italian in America'

TO DATE, there are over 300 types of pasta worldwide. In fact, gourmet chefs from different corners of the world are coming up with more shapes and designs for pasta as various cuisine and cultures merge to form unique dishes. In order to make a meal an experience, chefs prefer to use the specific pasta that will perfectly match the sauce, spices and over-all presentation of a dish. It is a good thing that Colavita Pasta was introduced to the Philippine market. Colavita is a pasta brand recognized in Italy as one of the finest. Introduced in 1912, pasta selections bearing the Colavita brand name are products of bountiful wheat fields in Molise, land of strong vocation and passion for making pasta, and the rich farming tradition of the Colavita family. They drew upon the resources of their homeland to produce superb pasta for the people of Molise region, without knowing those generations later, Colavita pasta would conquer the whole of Italy and the rest of the world.

To attest to Colavita's premium quality, the Italian government through the Cerment organization granted Colavita the much-coveted right to declare "Certified Product of Italy" on its labels. Other products are just imported from or packed in Italy. When Colavita was introduced in the United States 30 years ago, it became the unanimous choice for authentic Italian dishes. It is now America's best-selling 100 percent Italian pasta - the " No. 1 Italian in America." Thus only Colavita can claim that it is "grown in Italy, produced in Italy, loved worldwide." Colavita uses only the finest durum wheat semolina, the secret why the pasta stays firm and in shape even after cooking. There are eleven Colavita pasta types to fit your cooking fancy - from the more common spaghetti, fettucine and linguine to the more sophisticated farfalle, capellini nests and tagliatelle nest spinach. Mix it up with tomato, olive oil or cream-based sauces, cook it as soup or toss it with greens and nuts to make a gourmet salad, Colavita pasta will not get soggy nor sticky; always al dente.

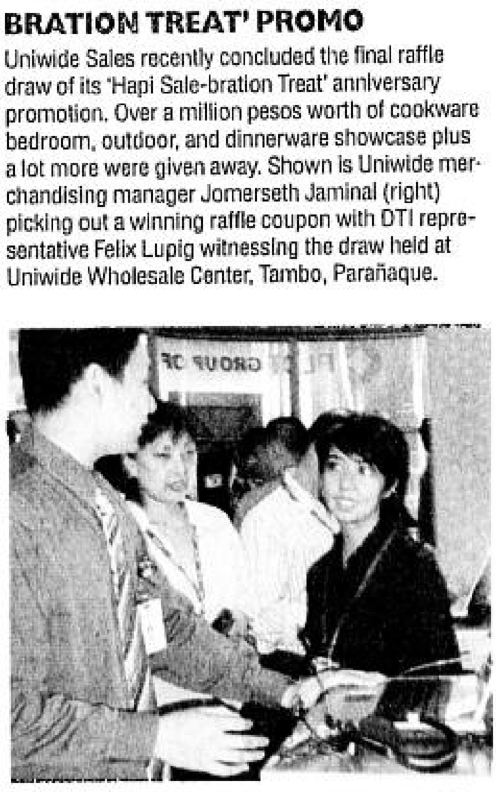
Colavita, another quality food product distributed by Benby Enterprises, is now available in leading supermarkets nationwide.





UNIWIDE SALES' 'HAPI SALE-BRATION TREAT' PROMO

Uniwide Sales recently concluded the final raffle draw of its 'Hapi Sale-bration Treat' anniversary promotion. Over a million pesos worth of cookware bedroom, outdoor, and dinnerware showcase plus a lot more were given away. Shown is Uniwide merchandising manager Jomerseth Jaminal (right) picking out a winning raffle coupon with DTI representative Felix Lupig witnessing the draw held at Uniwide Wholesale Center, Tambo, Parañaque.



PLDT JOINS CEBU ICT CONGRESS

PLDT Company recently participated as one of the major sponsors during the First National Information and Communications Technology in Basic Education Congress in Cebu City. The two-day ICT Congress was aimed at improving the teaching skills of educators in information and communications technology, in line with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's 10-point legacy agenda. Photo shows presidential daughter Evangeline 'Luli' Arroyo (extreme right), being briefed on the features of the PLDT DSL service at the PLDT Group of Companies' booth showcasing ICT products and services.

DHL delivers blessings to less-fortunate children

DHL, the world's leading express and logistics company, brought Christmas cheer to over 1,000 children from different parts of Metro Manila and Cebu through its employee-volunteerism project, "Deliver a Blessing". Books, clothes, and toys given by the employees themselves were turned over to select foundations championing children's welfare and development, namely Vides and Laura Vicuna Foundation in Manila, and Batang Opon in Cebu.

In typical DHL Express tradition, the goods arrived just in time to bring Christmas cheer to the kids, with every gift packed and delivered by the passionate team of professionals that make up DHL Philippines. But because the shipment was quite unique, so was the manner of delivery. The employees hosted parties for the beneficiaries, both in Manila and Cebu, treating the kids to a delightful ensemble of fun and games, sumptuous food, special prizes, and of course, Christmas gifts for each and every child. Books were also turned over to the foundations' libraries to serve as supplemental education, accessible to everybody.

The recipients comprise of kids from Cubao, Pasay, Tondo, Sta Mesa, and Cebu - who most enthusiastically received their "pamaskos" (Christmas treats). Roundabout 250 kids from Pasay and Cubao joined the Manila bash, which was held in Don Bosco School grounds in Sta. Mesa. The children expressed their thanks through a series of lively song and dance performances for their new "Ates and Kuyas" (older brothers and sisters).

Alan Cassels, DHL Express Philippines country manager, said, "DHL's philosophy is to give back to the communities wherever DHL operates in Asia Pacific. We are happy to support especially the area of children's welfare and development. As a global corporate citizen, it is our commitment to help in relevant issues such as poverty, health, children's welfare and education."

PHILIPS DONATES P1 MILLION TO TYPHOON VICTIMS

Philips Group of Companies in the Philippines has donated P1 million to help thousands of Filipinos who have been displaced by typhoons 'Winnie' and 'Yoyong' that recently ravaged Quezon and neighboring provinces. Philips has coursed the financial donation through the Department of Health, which is providing medical treatment and supplies to the stricken areas as part of the government's overall relief operations. Shown in photo are (from left): Butch Soriano, senior manager for Philips Medical Systems; Med Mateo, president and CEO of Philips Philippines; Manuel Dayrit, Secretary of the Department of Health; and Nini Icban, corporate communications manager of Philips Philippines.

EPLDT, UNIVERSITY OF SAN AGUSTIN INK MOA

ePLDT, the information and communication technology arm of the PLDT Group, through its ePLDT Call Centers, recently forged an alliance with the University of San Agustin (USA) Iloilo City on the implementation of a customer service representative (CSR) training program for USA's selected graduating college students. This course focuses on call center fundamentals (with special emphasis on English proficiency) to equip students with the skills for prospective employment in ePLDT's call centers as CSRs. At the contract signing are (seated, from left): Fr. Generous P. Gonesto, VP for administration, USA; Rev. Fr. Manuel M. Vergara, OSA, president, USA; Ken Brian P. Lamzon, business development director, ePLDT Call Center; Burg Hughes, director for consumer direct and ePLDT Call Center client; Letty G. Gonzalez, senior manager, PLDT Call Center Business Group; (standing, from left): lawyer Julius Elvas, director for human resource Development USA; engineer Geony J. Provido, director, planning and development, USA; Jigger S. Latoza, executive assistant to the president and director for research and publications, USA and Katrina Ledesma, ePLDT Call Center recruitment specialist.

Security Bank MasterCard promo winner ends P1M shopping spree

THE GRAND prize winner of the "Win a Million, Spend a Million" promotion, by MasterCard and Security Bank, has concluded his spectacular 10-month 1-million peso shopping spree, sharing his prize with his family every month since February 2004. The winner was selected among hundreds of contestants who joined the contest by simply charging P500 worth of purchases on their Security Bank MasterCard card.

Prior to the grand draw held last February 2004, the promotion ran for 12 months and gave away P20,000 each to five participants drawn every month.

The grand winner, Rodolfo Honrado, received his one million pesos prize through monthly installments of P100,000, credited onto his Security Bank MasterCard card account. This provided him with the convenience and security while shopping with his family.

"Love and financial security are two of the most important attributes any parent can hope to give to their children, and through winning this prize it has assisted my wife and me in securing part of our children's future." said Honrado.

"We are delighted to have touched the life of one of our valued MasterCard cardholders and we hope to touch the lives of many more cardholders through such promotions. This promotion has truly captured the essence of MasterCard's Priceless advertising campaign in giving cardholders precious memories which they will cherish," said Belen C. Lim, president of SB Cards Corp.

A major portion of Honrado's grand prize has assisted in financing the construction and furnishing of two homes for his children and their families. In addition to this, Horando was also able to renovate his own house, to the delight of his wife, purchase a motorbike for his son, as well as finance his granddaughter's wedding.

"My wife was out shopping for groceries and other regular purchases almost everyday since we received the prize. I applied for a supplementary card in order to allow her freedom to go shopping as she wishes. My children soon after also became loyal Security Bank MasterCard cardholders," added Honrado.

Security Bank MasterCard is issued by SB Cards Corp, a wholly owned subsidiary of Security Bank Corp. To apply for a Security Bank MasterCard and join its future promotions, call 887-9177.

MAUREEN LARRAZABAL ON GSMI 2005 CALENDAR

Sexy comedienne Maureen Larrazabal is the 2005 Calendar Girl for Ginebra San Miguel, Inc. (GSMI). After appearing in the 'Bilog ang Mundo' TV and radio GSMI ads - which signaled a repositioning of the World's Largest Selling Gin - Larrazabal now graces several versions of the wall and pocket calendars that feature the company's various brands. The calendar has been eagerly awaited by the company's dealers, suppliers and their growing consumers. Larrazabal was recently presented to the GSMI employees by VP for marketing Sammy T. Jardin (left) and VP for sales Nelson S. Elises (right).

GMA NETWORK CEO RANKS NO. 15 IN BIZNEWS ASIA'S POWER 100

GMA Network chair, president and CEO Felipe L. Gozon ranked No. 15 in this year's BizNews Asia's Power 100, two notches higher than his No. 17 rank in 2003. BizNews Asia's Power 100 list is composed of the most influential personalities in the country with higher priority given to businessmen, rather than politicians this year. Gozon was cited for being instrumental in making GMA Network 'the No. 1, most profitable and most independent television station'. According to BizNews Asia, 'Gozon has willed Channel 7 to be the No.1 using unusual vision aggressiveness, careful planning and savvy marketing.' GMA Network has posted significant leads in all day parts over its nearest competitor, and has even gained its biggest advantage in the hotly contested primetime block based on the surveys conducted by both AGB and Nielsen Media in Mega Manila. GMA Network has continued to expand and upgrade its 46 VHF stations all over the country.

BANKARD CONCLUDES WOMEN'S WORLD '04 EXHIBIT

Credit card industry pioneer Bankard, Inc has succeeded in bringing together today's career women in one grand event in its recently concluded exhibit 'Women's World '04'. Hundreds of Bankard's female credit cardholders and prospective clients trooped to the World Trade Center, site of the exhibit, to catch the exciting showcase of products and services exclusively for women. The four-day exhibit featured over 4,000 brands ranging from apparel, jewelry, cosmetics and other accessories to premium gift items and house wares. Former senator Loren Legarda, herself an epitome of today's woman, was guest of honor during the exhibit. Joining her at the opening ceremonies were (from left): Jing Lagandaon, deputy managing director of Globalink, the exhibit organizer; Lalaine Juan, product manager of myDream JCB; and Irene Taylo, Bankard marketing and sales head.

Housing agencies donate X-mas party funds to calamity victims

EMPLOYEES of government housing agencies had a different kind of Christmas celebration as funds for their Christmas parties were instead donated to the calamity victims who were affected by the four typhoons that hit various parts of Luzon. This was announced by Vice President Noli de Castro, concurrent Chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC).

HUDCC, as well as the attached housing agencies, National Housing Authority (NHA), National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC), Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC), Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB), and the Pag-IBIG Fund pooled the funds allocated for their respective Christmas parties, and donated the amount to the Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation to help the affected communities and families.

Vice President de Castro himself handed over the the check amounting to P3.4 million to GK executive director Antonio Meloto during simple ceremonies held at the NHA Compound recently. The turnover ceremony held at the same venue highlighted the simple Christmas fair for employees of the housing agencies, in lieu of their Christmas parties.

According to de Castro, this is the most fitting way for the housing sector to celebrate the Christmas season in view of recent events. "Many families have lost their homes, their livelihood and their loved ones in these calamities. We have to put their needs over and above our own wish to rejoice and have fun," he said. "What better way to commemorate the birth of our Savior than to share what little we can to alleviate the suffering of our brothers and sisters and make this season a little bit warmer for them," he added.

ProductFILES

A great movie and popcorn experience

THERE'S nothing like watching a great movie right at the comfort of one's own home. Movies and popcorn have always been a delightful duo. Snacking on crunchy popped golden corn kernels makes a movie experience extra fun and engaging. So when planning a "movie night" at home, grab a bag of healthy Act II Microwave Popcorn, the America's no.1 popcorn. Act II comes in various flavors that are sure to satisfy every fancy. There's Act II Butter and Extreme Butter, for those who want to indulge in the lusciously creamy goodness of butter, added with just the right dash of salt. Act II Light Butter is rich in butter essence but has less fat and calories. Act II Movie Theatre Butter on the other hand, will give you a taste of Hollywood - a classic buttery popcorn snack savored by moviegoers at local silver screen theaters. For those who would like to enjoy popcorn minus the guilt, they can grab Act II 94 percent Fat Free Butter. Popcorn during the good old days is perfectly captured in a bowl of Act II Old Fashion Natural. Especially seasoned with light oil and salt, this is the brand's version of the delicious corn treat moms and dads used to pop over the stove. Relish this sweet and salty popcorn snack instantly just by opening a bag of Act II Kettle Corn and popping it in microwave. Act II Sweet Corn tastes just like the fresh, out-of-the-husk corn on the cob that offers the delightful blend of sweet butter and light salt. Act II Microwave Popcorn is available in leading supermarkets nationwide.

ACT II
Butter
ACT II
Kettle Corn

Diphenhydramine
Hydrochloride

BENADRYL AH JOINS MEDI-MEDIA HEALTH FAIR

Benadryl AH conducted a lecture on the triggers, symptoms and appropriate treatment for allergic rhinitis during the recently conducted Medi-Media Health Fair in Alabang Town Center. After the lecture, a short Q&A was held wherein participants who answered correctly were given token prizes. Samples of Benadryl AH capsule and leaflets were also distributed to the attendees. Benadryl AH capsule is effective in relieving the symptoms of allergic rhinitis such as sneezing, runny or clogged nose and itchy, watery eyes.

CERVEZA NEGRA DARK REVELRIES

The Cerveza Negra 'Seize the Night, Enjoy the Dark' bar tour spreads the fun and mystery of the dark across the Metropolis. Different groups of musicians spearheaded by the 'Late Isabel Band' had a taste of Cerveza Negra's 'dark' revelry at Bistro 110 Bar in Makati. Fast-rising alternative artist Kitchie Nadal rendered a powerful performance that kept rocking their seats. Later, select members of the audience took center stage as they were challenged to showcase their skills - sharpness, agility, and speed, in various fun games. Like all Cerveza Negra parties, this was definitely a night of utmost pleasure and entertainment. Since the bar tour started, Cerveza Negra has catered to different organizations and groups sharing their passion for sports, business, music, the arts and more. Each leg adopts a theme that suits the audience's fancy, making each night a unique and 'dark' experience. Photo shows event hosts DJ Crystal, DJ Slyde together with one of Cerveza Negra's promo girls.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Saving need not be a struggle

HOW do we instill in our children the value of saving? Start them young, when they are simple and impressionable.

The Philippines has one of the lowest saving rates in the region. This is because many Filipinos haven't been instructed in the need to save. Saving is a way of pooling money, putting it in a bank and making it available for various business and development projects. In this way, savings become part of the economic cycle and become a catalyst for economic growth.

For savers, this means a stable future because they have something to draw from in time of need. Moreover, their money in the bank earns some interest, so saving becomes a form of investment. But to learn how to save, we have to begin at the grassroots, and this is done with the education of our children.

The Real Bank, among the country's Top 25 thrift banks, has embarked on a campaign to achieve this purpose. Via a special advocacy campaign called "Bata...Bata...Mag-impok at Magsinop," the bank is doing its part in encouraging children to save. The campaign is also Real Bank's way of reaching out to the community in celebration of its 28th year in the business.

Together with the Department of Education (Dep-Ed), The Real Bank brings on tour a skit or play to selected private and public elementary schools in NCR, Region 3 and Region 4. The skit opens with the introduction of "Temyong Tipid," the hardworking ant that serves as the bank's mascot for its savings program for the young. Then it segues into the mother-son story of Nanay and Alfred. Young Alfred is a pain-in-the-neck because of his spendthrift ways and careless attitude. Coming home from school, he throws his stuff everywhere and Nanay is reduced to picking up his mess.

Worse, Alfred is wasteful with his school paraphernalia. Pens, pencils, notebooks and pads - he uses them wantonly and out they go once he's done with them. Nanay comes to the rescue and instills in him the value of maximizing the use of his things, uniform and classroom items. Truly, every small step done in the judicious use of his things leads to savings. And by this, Alfred is able to save money that can be put in the bank. Towards the end, Nanay and Alfred exhorts the kids and the audience to do the same.

The campaign sends the message that saving is a fun and delightful activity, usually done with the inspiration and guidance of parents or guardians. More importantly, saving can start at an early age and it can be done by merely being wise in the use of one's resources.

Of course, banks are a big help because they make it easier for parents and their children to understand the value of saving and in making their future a lot better.

The Real Bank has a savings deposit program for children called Real Kiddie Savers' Club (RKSC) account, where a child needs only P100 to open an account. Meanwhile, with a maintaining balance of P500, the account gets to earn a 5 percent interest per annum.

A child's enrolment in a RKSC account automatically makes him a member of the Real Kiddie Savers Club where he or she gets rewarded with special gift items for the amount of deposit he or she maintains in the bank. Promotional items will also be changed from time to time to keep on encouraging the child to continue saving.

Thus, with such schemes, The Real Bank makes it possible for kids to learn, appreciate and value the need to save their money. With a partnership with the Dep-Ed, the bank further elevates the education of the kids into the business of saving to a higher level, a social concern that must be taught at an early stage.

For more information on how your kids can save, go to a The Real Bank branch nearest you or call 928-5545 or visit www.realbank.com.ph. The Real Bank branches are located at Metro Manila: Timog Ave., Anonas, Fairview, Novaliches, Broadway Centrum, Makati Ave.; Rizal: Masinog, Antipolo, Cainta, Taytay, San Mateo; Bulacan: Baliuag, Balagtas, Malolos, Meycauayan, Guiguinto, Plaridel; Cavite: Bacoor, Dasmariñas; Laguna: San Pedro, Sta. Rosa, Calamba; Batangas: Lipa, Batangas.

MABUHAY SATELLITE CORP, CLCI SIGN AGREEMENT

Mabuhay Satellite Corp (MSC), a PLDT subsidiary, recently signed an agreement with Center for Leadership and Change Inc (CLCI) for the live downlink to corporate and public venues of the Stephen Covey Session on Nov. 19, 2004 at Dusit Hotel Nikko, Makati City. Present during the signing are (seated from left): MSC legal counsel lawyer Froi Rocas; MSC president and CEO Gabriel Z. Pimentel; CLCI president Ma. Carmen Alcuaz-Reyes and CLCI consultant Renato Montemayor; (standing, same order): MSC marketing officer Marie Joanne P. Palaroan and CLCI project coordinator Maribel Perez.

CONDO PROJECT IN QC

Vice President Noli 'Kabayan' De Castro (middle), concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), led the groundbreaking ceremony for Residencia de Regina, a 30-storey residential-commercial condominium project located at Xavierville Avenue, Quezon City. Developed by BANFF Realty and Development Corp and comprising 345 residential units, beneficiaries of the project include middle-income earners, teachers and parents of students from nearby schools such as the University of the Philippines, the Ateneo De Manila University, and the Miriam College, as well as employees from government agencies like the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Philippine Coconut Authority. The condo project is under the Pag-IBIG Fund's Medium and High Rise Building Program, which aims to generate housing for urban dwellers. Shown assisting the Vice President are Ramon Syhunliong (beside the Vice President), president, BANFF Corp; lawyer Romero Quimbo (far right), president and CEO, Pag-IBIG Fund and staff of BANFF Corp.

J&J partners with Well Family Midwives Clinic

JOHNSON & Johnson (J&J) Philippines recently forged an alliance with Well Family Midwives Clinic (WFMC), a network of clinics managed by licensed midwives that provide affordable and accessible quality healthcare such as family planning and basic maternal and child health services. Well Family also gives midwives entrepreneurial opportunities through its franchising program.

Through the alliance of the two companies that share the vision of promoting mother and child health, special J&J Baby Kits will be available at all Well Family Midwives Clinics at a very friendly price. Well Family patients and visitors may avail of discounted Baby Kits, which contain J&J baby oil, baby powder, baby wash, baby lotion, diaper rash cream, baby wipes, and other quality J&J products. Also, J&J will donate valuable educational tools such as flyers, brochures, flip charts and other informative materials on maternal and child care.

Says Lourdes Mangahas, Well Family Midwives Clinic Partnership Foundation VP for internal affairs, "The partnership with J&J is a fitting project because many Well Family midwives have long used J&J products. For its quality, J&J products are always recommended to mothers in addressing their baby's needs. Hopefully, this good relationship will flourish and open doors for greater opportunities."

Allan Ancheta, J&J senior professional marketing manager added, "We believe in the cause of Well Family Midwives Clinic to provide quality, affordable, and accessible maternal and child healthcare services to Filipinos. In support of this, we want their patrons to be able to conveniently and affordably avail of our products to nurture and care for their babies."

At present, there are over 150 Well Family Midwives Clinics operating nationwide. For inquiries contact the Well-Family Midwife Clinic Partnerships Foundation Inc at tel. nos. 426-7947, 426-7950 (telefax) or email wpfiwfmc@trisys.com.

ASSET DISPOSAL PROJECT
NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

"AS-IS-WHERE-IS"
FOR THE SALE OF
NPC TUGBOAT NO. 2 & 3

DATE OF BIDDING: January 20, 2005

The National Power Corporation will received sealed bids on an "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis for the assets described below:

ITEM DESCRIPTION		MIN. BID PRICE
LOT 1: One (1) unit Unused Tugboat, 3000 PS (Tugboat No. 3)		P 38,685,000.00
Length (Overall, without rubber fender/sheat	: 33.30 meter (approx.)	
Breadth (molded)	: 9.20 meter	
Depth (molded)	: 3.90 meter	
Designed Load Draught (molded)	: 2.90 meter	
Gross Tonnage (international)	: 310.00 tons	
Loading Capacity	: 80.00 tons (approx.)	
MAIN DIESEL ENGINES		
•Make	: Mitsubishi	
No. of Units	: 2 units	
No. of Cylinder	: 6 cylinders	
Max. Continuous Output	: 1500 PS @1150 rpm	
Normal Output	: 1350 PS @1110 rpm	
Acquired	: 1998	
Location	: Naga, Cebu	
LOT 2: One (1) unit Tugboat (Tugboat No. 2)		P 38,773,450.00
Length (Overall)	: 30.40 meters	
Beam (Molded)	: 7.40 meters	
Draft Maximum	: 2.30 meters	
Gross Tonnage	: 180 tons	
Main Diesel Engine, 2 Units	: Detroit 16V-92N 626 PS @ 1,800 RPM	
Generator Engine, 2 Units	: Detroit, Type 4-71N 70KW @ 1,800 RPM	
Rated Output	: 1,200 HP	
Manufacturer	: President Marine	
Date Manufactured	: 1994	
Location	: Naga, Cebu	

Interested eligible bidders may obtain bidding documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Five Thousand Pesos (PhP5,000.00)** at the Materials Management Department Office, Ground Floor, Building No. 1, National Power Corporation, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Bids will be opened in the presence of bidders' representatives at **10:00 AM on January 20, 2005** at the NPC Solarium, NPC Head Office. Bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond (Cash or Manager's Check only) of not less than **ten percent (10%)** of the total amount to bid. The Power Sector Asset and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation have concurred with the bidding process and clearance for the disposal was duly approved.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any required informality, and to accept such bids that is most advantageous to the Government.

Issuance of bidding documents is on **January 3-15, 2005**. Additional information may be obtained from Asset Disposal Project office at telephone nos. 922-3970, and 921-3541 loc. 5582, or e-mail us at lcarabelo@napocor.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) LEVI C. ARABELO
Manager, BNPP Preservation & Disposal Project
& Chairman, Task Force for the Disposal of Tugboats 2&3

(PDI-Dec 29, 2004, Jan 3 & 4, 2005)

40
MILO
YEARS
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MILO RECOGNIZES VALUABLE PARTNERS

Milo culminated its 40th anniversary with the theme 'Let's build a faster, higher, stronger republic' recently at the Isla Ballroom of the Edsa Shangri-La Plaza Hotel. In this event, Milo presented plaques of appreciation to the Milo sports committees who had been an integral part in developing sports in the country. Shown are (from left): Eugene David, group product manager, Nestlé Phils Inc; Eugenio Simioni, marketing director, Nestlé Phils Inc; Lucrecio Calo, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Tacloban; Vic Sai, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Davao and General Santos; Conrado Jaime, former Milo Sports executive, Nestle Phils Inc; Marilyn Jorge, executive vice president, Milo Best Center; Nicanor Jorge, founder and president, Milo Best Center; Rudy Biscocho, Milo Marathon national race organizer; Esther Saludo, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Lipa; Vice Mayor Rolen Paulino, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Olongapo; Pedro Lee, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Naga; Antonio del Monte, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Baguio; Severo Pison Jr, Milo Marathon regional organizer - Iloilo; Salvador Pigem, president and CEO, Nestlé Phils Inc.

Bits & Clips

Male Model Search

THE SEARCH is on for the Datu Marikudo Male Model Search 2005, a male modeling competition organized by Bess Tonel for Match Productions. Featuring the collections of Barge Ramos, Gerry Katigbak, Dong Omaga Diaz, Avel Bacudio and Richard Papa. This spectacular gala event is directed by Ogee Atos. The grand finals will be on Jan. 8 at the ABL Sports Complex Makato, Aklan. Hosted by Abbygale Arenas-de Leon. Prizes at stake for the grand prize winner, first and second runners-up include cash and gift certificates from participating sponsors. Proudly presented by Keikomecheri, Essenses Rustans. The event is also being supported by: Tiananmen Bar, Viva Mineral Water, Boysen Paints, Confetti, Red Coconut Beach Hotel Boracay, Freckles Resort Boracay, Bamboo Lounge Boracay, Summer Place Bar Boracay, Cafe Breizh Boracay, Mc Sandro Bistro Boracay, Tommy's Sea Sports Boracay, ACLC Kalibo, Aklan, Adee's Catering Services; and media partners: Woman Today, Magic 89.9 and Jam 88.3.

CHS '55 Grand Reunion

THE CHS '55 Alumni Association is inviting all 1955 graduates of Cavite High School to join and celebrate its Golden Homecoming and Grand Reunion to be held on Jan. 4 and 8 in Cavite City. Lourdes Vinzon CHS '55 president and head of the organizing committee announced that the day's festivities will start in Caridad Elementary School at 7 a.m. today. A day-long fun-filled activity in Portica de Gracia Resort, Kawit Cavite has been prepared for the graduates. For details, call Vinzon at (046)431-0518; Rogelio Co at (046)431-2336; Pacifico Anglo (046)431-0625 and Lito Beltran (632)813-7420/843-5341 or 0919-7798597, email - info@photoworldmanila.com.

Maxx, Magic Flakes promo

HOW would you like to begin the New Year with a million, or even two million pesos? Don't miss your chance to participate in Manila Broadcasting Company's (MBC) Bagong taon Bagong Milyon Promo, staged in cooperation with Maxx Menthol Candy and Magic Crackers. Ongoing until Jan. 21, listeners can send their entries to participating MBC radio stations nationwide. The grand draw will be held on Jan. 29 at the Aliw Theater and the grand prize is 1 million pesos, plus get the chance to win as much as double that amount through the Grand Bonus Ping Pong Game. Ten empty wrappers of your favorite Maxx Menthol Candy variant equal one raffle entry. You can also submit empty packs or tin can covers of any of Magic cracker's enticing flavors for more entries - Magic Flakes Plain, Magic Flakes Cheese, and any variant of Magic Flakes Sandwich or Magic Pleasures. You can use four empty 30-gram packs, one family pack or one tin can cover for your entry. Include your name, age, address, telephone number and signature in the raffle entries and indicate the proof-of-purchase you used. Place your entry in a white legal-sized envelope, write the promo week number and proof of purchase used on the upper right side of the envelope and mail to your favorite MBC stations. See posters and print ads for details.

China Bank promo

A BANK-wide raffle promotion dubbed as "Grateful at 85" was recently launched in anticipation of China Bank's 85th milestone anniversary. Running until July 31, the promo gives away more than P6.5 million in prizes, tax-free. For the grand draw, one winner each will take home the following treats: P2.85 million in cash, Samsung Home Theater Package, trip for two to Hongkong inclusive of hotel accommodations (3 days, 2 nights) and P10,000 pocket money, Sony Handycam model IP-1. Four preliminary draws will also be held every two months starting February 2005. Total prizes at stake are: 85 top of the line cellphone units, 85 Sony DVD players, 4 P85,000 deposit accounts. The 8-month long promo aims to reward loyal China Bank clients for their continued support and patronage to the bank. Draws will be held at the China Bank head office in the presence of a DTI representative on Feb 3, April 26, June 23 and Aug. 16.

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Republic of the Philippines
Province of Quirino
Municipality of Diffun
-oOo-

OFFICE OF THE BAC CHAIRMAN

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1 The Government of the Philippines through the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of Agrarian Reform Community Project (ARCP). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will applied to eligible payments under the contract of Rural Infrastructure Component for which his Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and Bid is issued.

2 The Municipality of Diffun, Quirino as implementing partner of the DAR for ARCP, invites contractors classified and registered with the Philippine Contractor Accreditation Board (PCAB) as MEDIUM B or higher for similar contract to apply for eligibility and to bid for.

3 The Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid for the Concreting of Isidro Paredes – San Isidro Farm to Market Road is P 18.3M. The contract works which shall have contract duration of about 120 calendar days will involved Pipe Culvert & Drainage Excavation, Embankment, Subgrade Preparation, Aggregate base Course, PCCP, 610 mm & 910 mm RCPC, Grouted Riprap.

Minimum Required Equipment
No. of Units - Description - Capacity
2 - Motorized Grade - 110-130 HP; 2 - Vibratory Road Roller - 10 tons at least; 2 - Water Truck with Sprayor - 1,500 gal capacity; 2 - 1- bag Conc. Mixer - 6 cum / day, 2 - Concrete Vibrator (rod type); 2 - Bar Cutter, 2 - Stake Truck; 2 - pay Loader - 275 HP; 8 - Ten Wheeler Dump Trucks - 9-10 cum / load; 2 - Backhoe - 50 cum / day; 4 - Transit Mixer - 3.5 - 4 cum capacity; 2 - Concrete Cutter

Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent and Eligibility Requirements	January 20, 2005 / 5:00 PM
Issuance of Bidding Documents	January 18 – January 31, 2005 @ 5:00 PM
Pre-Bid Conference	February 1, 2005 at 9:00 AM
Opening of Bids	February 15, 2005 at 9:00 AM

4. Prospective Bidders should secure and fill up the Information Sheet from the BAC Secretariat. Eligibility requirements in sealed envelopes, properly bound, with all contents numbered consecutively and signed by the prospective bidder or his duly authorized representative must be submitted to: The BAC Chairman, Municipal Hall, Diffun, Quirino.

5 Unless otherwise indicated in the instructions to Bidders or other bidding and contract documents, all particular relative to the procurement and contract implementation shall be governed by RA 9184 and its IRR - A

6. Bid documents will be issued to eligible bidders by the Office of the Bids Awards Committee, Municipal Hall, Diffun, Quirino upon payment of the non-refundable fee of One Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (1,500.00)

7. The implementing agency reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defects therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the government

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Jan. 4 & 11, 2005)

PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You, no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your Perpetual Glory. Amen.

PRAYER TO BLESSED MOTHER (NEVER KNOWN TO FAIL)
Oh most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this necessity. Oh star of the sea, help me and show herein you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech You from the bottom of My Heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand Your power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recoursed to thee (3x) Holy Mother, I place this course in your hands (3x). Sweet Mother, I place this course in Your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, You who solve all problems so that I can attain my goal, You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life You are with me. I want this short prayer. Thank you for all things as I confirm once again that I never want to be separated from You in eternal glory. Thank you for Your mercy towards me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days the request will be granted This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.

Republic of the Philippines
Regional Trial Court of Batangas
Fourth Judicial Region
Branch 13, Lipa City

IN RE: PETITION FOR THE CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH IN THE CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL REGISTRAR OF CUENCA, BATANGAS.

GREGORIA R. LARCIA-GONZALES
Petitioner,
- versus - SP. PROC NO. 2004-0858
THE MUNICIPAL CIVIL REGISTRAR OF CUENCA, BATANGAS,
Respondent.
x---x

ORDER

Before this Court is a verified petition for correction of entry in the Certificate of Live Birth of herein petitioner, Gregoria R. Larcia-Gonzales praying that after due notice, publication and hearing, an Order be issued directing the Municipal Civil Registrar of Cuenca, Batangas to make the necessary correction in her birth certificate as regards the entry of he Date of Birth from September 8, 1950 to May 8, 1950

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, let the same be set for hearing on January 26, 2005 at 8:30 A.M., at which date and time any interested person may appear and show cause why the petition should not be granted

The Branch Clerk of Court is directed to furnish the Office of the Clerk of Court with a copy of this Order for publication once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the Province of Batangas at petitioner's expense

Let copies of this Order and the Petition be furnished the Office of the Solicitor General and the City Prosecutor of Lipa. Likewise, let copies of the Order be sent to the Municipal Civil Registrar, Cuenca, Batangas, petitioner and counsel

SO ORDERED.

Lipa City, 30 November 2004.

(Sgd.) JANE AURORA C. LANTION
Judge

(PDI--Dec. 21, 28, 2004 & Jan. 4, 2005)

(CR Form 161 LCRO)

Republic of the Philippines
Local Civil Registry Office
Province of Misamis Oriental
Cagayan De Oro City

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that LETTY M. MAGLACION has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from LETECIA to LETTY. In the Certificate of Live Birth of LETECIA DACULOS MONCADA who was born on June 20, 1962 at MALUKO, BUKIDNON and whose parents are GUILLERMO L. MONCADA and SATURNINA BA-A DACULOS.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition within this office not later than January 10, 2005.

(Sgd) Norma S. Diputado
City Civil Registrar

(PDI-January 4&10, 2005)

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Armed Forces of the Philippines invites all local T-41D Engine Repair Shops/Facilities to apply for eligibility and to bid for the repair / overhaul of two (2) T-41D Engine Assy (SNs: 808807-R and 808783-R) with an approved budget of P2,800,000.00 chargeable against CY 2004 Aircraft Maintenance Fund.

Likewise, the AFP invites all local suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the procurement of **four (4) sets of Main Rotor Blade Assy with PN/NSN 204-011-250-113 / 1615-01-092-1256** with an approved budget of P31,424,000.00 chargeable against CY-2004 Aircraft Maintenance Fund.

Only bids from entities who have authorized repair facilities for **T-41D Engine Assy** shall be entertained.

Bid documents will be available for issuance starting **January 04, 2005 until February 02, 2005** during office hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) at the BAC Secretariat Office, AFP Logistics Command, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable amount of **Two Thousand Eight Hundred Pesos (P2,800.00)** for the **T-41D Engine Assy** and **Thirty One Thousand Four Hundred Twenty Four Pesos (P31,424.00)** for the **Main Rotor Blade Assy.** The form of payment will be in cash or cashier's check in favor of the **Armed Forces of the Philippines.**

Representatives are required to present a Certification from their foreign principal that they are authorized to transact business on behalf of their principal as well as Special Power of Attorney issued by the principal before issuance of the bid documents.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on the following dates:

Nomenclature	*Date/Place*
Two (2) T-41D Engine Assy (SNs: 808807-R and 808783-R)	January 28, 2005 at 9:00 A.M. at the Silid Panday Pira, OJ9, 1/F Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Four (4) Main Rotor Blades with PN/NSN 204-011-250-113/1615-01-092-1256	January 28, 2005 at 11:00 A.M. at the Silid Panday Pira, OJ9, 1/F Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City

Bidders may inquire in writing to the BAC Secretariat three (3) days prior to the Pre-Bid Conference.

Deadlines for submission of applications for eligibility requirements and the bid envelopes are as follows:

Nomenclature	*Date/Place*
Two (2) T-41D Engine Assy (SNs: 808807-R and 808783-R)	February 09, 2005 at 9:00 A.M. at the Silid Panday Pira, OJ9, 1/F Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Four (4) Main Rotor Blades with PN/NSN 204-011-250-113/1615-01-092-1256	February 11, 2005 at 9:00 A.M. at the Silid Panday Pira, OJ9, 1/F Bulwagang Mabini, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City

The Armed Forces of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any or all bids pursuant to RA 9184 without assuming any obligation whatsoever for any expenses or losses that may be incurred by the bidder in the preparation of his bid.

(Sgd.) JORGE G. NECESITO
RADM AFP
Chairman

(PDI--Jan. 4 & 11, 2005)

ASSET DISPOSAL PROJECT
NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

"AS-IS-WHERE-IS"
FUEL TANK BARGE "T-228"
DATE OF BIDDING: 10 AM / JANUARY 20, 2005

The National Power Corporation will receive sealed bids on an "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis for the sale of the asset described below:

ITEM / DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
Lot 1 - One (1) Unit, FUEL BARGE (Non-propelled), "T-228" Material of Hull : Steel Length Overall (LOA) : 82.00 meters Length between Perpendiculars (LWL) : 81.26 meters Breadth (molded) : 25.26 meters Number of Deck : Single Gross Tonnage (Approx) : 2,610 tons Net Tonnage (Approx) : 2,591 tons Fuel Barge Capacity : 40,000 barrels Date Launched : July 17, 1993 Shipbuilder Hull No. : 63	Batangas Coal-Fired Thermal Power Plant, Calaca, Batangas	P29,965,000.00

Interested eligible bidders may obtain bidding documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Thousand Pesos (PhP2,000.00) at the Materials Management Department office, Ground Floor, Building No. 1, National Power Corporation, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Bids will be opened in the presence of bidders' representatives at 10:00 AM on JANUARY 20, 2005 at the NPC Solarium, NPC Head Office. Bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond (Cash or Manager's Check only) of not less than ten percent (10%) of the total amount of bid. The Power Sector Asset and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation have concurred with the bidding process and clearance for the disposal was duly approved.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to wave any informality, and to accept such bids as may be deemed most advantageous to the Government.

Issuance of bidding documents is on January 3-15, 2005. For additional information, please call Asset Disposal Project at telephone nos. 922-3970, and 921-3541 loc. 5582, or e-mail us at lcarabelo@napocor.gov.ph

(Sgd.) LEVI C. ARABELO
Manager, BNPP Preservation & Disposal Project
& Chairman, Task Force on the Disposal of Fuel Barge

(PDI--Dec. 29, 2004, Jan 3 & 4, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF CEBU
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
DepEd Bldg., PGSO, Cebu Capitol, Cebu City
Telephone Nos. 253-9614; 254-1649; 416-6065

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Province of Cebu, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), hereby invites suppliers/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : Catering Services for the SUBSISTENCE of 1,400 jail inmates
Location : New Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (CPDRC), Kalunasan, Cebu City
Brief Description : MEALS (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
Approved Budget for the Contract : P6,300,000.00 or P30.00/person/day
Contract Duration : Five (5) months (February 1, 2005 to June 30, 2005) or 150 days

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding, and have key personnel and equipment (owned, leased or under purchase) available for the prosecution of the project. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of bids shall also be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	January 4-12, 2005
2. Pre-bid conference	January 13, 2005, Thursday, 10:00 a.m.
3. Opening of bids	January 25, 2005, Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.
4. Bid Evaluation	January 26, 2005
5. Post-Qualification	January 27, 2005
6. Notice of Award	January 27, 2005

Bid Documents will be available only to the prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of ONE THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (P1,000.00) to the Cash Receipts Division, Office of the Provincial Treasurer.

The Province of Cebu assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. HABIN
BAC Chairman

(PDI--January 4 & 11, 2005)

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JOHNNY WILSON

Peacefully joined our Lord
on December 31, 2004 at the age of 69.

He is survived by his wife **Terry**; children, children-in-law and grandchildren: **Trixie**, **Al**, **Monique**, **Rossana**, **Gina**, **Stefan**, **Jamie**, **Anabel**, **Tabitha**, **Mishka**, **Phoebe**; sister **Doris**; sister-in-law **Milagros**; brother-in-law **Jun**; sister-in-law **Belen**; stepmother **Joan**; brother **Emery**; sisters **Lindy**, **Brenda** and **Cathy**; and other relatives and friends.

His remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will be on January 5, 2005 at St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Parish, Magallanes Village, Makati City after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Don Bosco Parish Church, Pasay Road corner Amorsolo, Makati City.

OUR DEARLY BELOVED

PEDRO YAP DY

of Naic, Cavite

Peacefully joined the Lord
*and his wife **Florentina Lim Dy***
on January 02, 2005 at the age of 82.

His children **Teresita** and **Albert H. Uy**, **Betty** and **Joselito D. Dela Torre**; his loving grandchildren **Karen Justine**, **Kaye Jeraldine**, **Jason Bernard** and **Justin Benedict**, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 6, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City, immediately following the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

So dearly missed, So lovingly remembered
in loving memory of the first death anniversary
of our beloved

MARIO S. PABLO, M.D.

10 January 1918 – 4 January 2004

His wife Rito Kanapi; children Monina-Arnold, Tony (†)-Joyce, Lita-Ching, Me-an-James and Marito; grandchildren Rolf, Janna, Kriscel, Ronn, Ramon, Jim, Tonini and Pam, request relatives and friends to continue to pray for the eternal repose of his soul. We thank you again for all your prayers, mass offerings and kind thoughts and gestures during our moment of grief.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life."

— John 3:16

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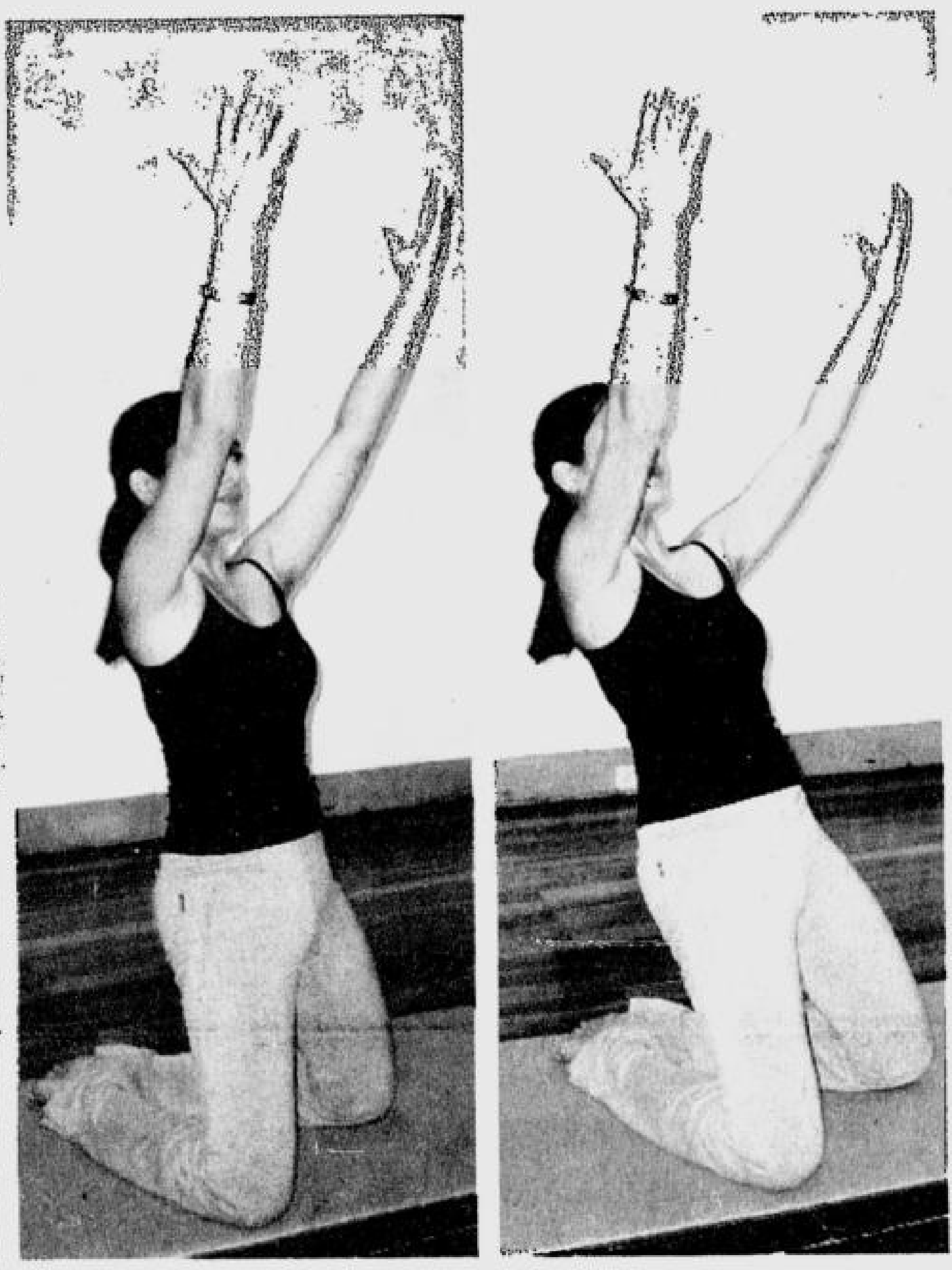
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Kneeling lean back



THIS exercise strengthens the front of the thighs.

Equipment:

Exercise mat

Exercise technique:

1. Kneel down with legs hip-width apart then raise arms overhead.

2. Tuck pelvis under and lean back until you feel tension in front of your thighs.

3. Hold for 10 seconds.

Performance tips:

1. It is important to tuck the pelvis under (you will know you are doing it right if you feel your buttocks tighten up) before leaning back to protect your knees.

2. Lean back only as far as you can without hurting your knees.

3. To increase the intensity of this exercise, try the following options:

a. Hold the leaning back position while you do alternating punches toward the ceiling.

b. Hold the leaning back position which you do small hip circles clockwise, then counterclockwise.

Repetitions:

Basic position—Do one to three times.

Alternating punches—One repetition = one right and left punch. Do 10 repetitions.

Hip circles—10 circles clockwise, 10 circles counterclockwise.

Starting exercise properly and safely

Part I

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

MANY people say they want to exercise but do not know how to start. Some people have never exercised before. Others exercised in the past but it was 10 or 20 years ago.

If you want to begin working out, here is basic information that will help you start properly and safely.

Get a doctor's clearance if necessary.

If you are a man over 40 or a woman over 50 who has been glued to your desk or couch for the last decade or so, it is wise to ask your doctor before you start exercise.

.No matter what age you are, if you have two or more heart disease risk factors (family history, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity), you should get your doctor's okay.

If you don't know your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, then there is more reason to visit your doctor before you begin exercising.

If you don't have any of the risk factors mentioned but have experienced any of the following, go see your doctor: pain or discomfort in chest, fast irregular heartbeats or very slow heart beats, dizziness, loss of balance, bone or joint problem, pain in legs or buttocks when you walk, cuts or wounds on feet that don't seem to heal, unexplained weight loss in the last six months.

Understand the components of fitness.

A solid exercise program has three main components. Aerobic or cardiovascular exercise makes your heart stronger, increases your stamina and burns calories. The second component—called strength, weight or resistance training—makes your muscles stronger and firmer. The third component, stretching, makes you more flexible. How much time you give each component depends on your goals.

Cardiovascular training

The simplest and most practical cardiovascular exercise is walking. Other exercises are jogging, running, swimming, cycling, dancing, aerobics, rowing, etc. Basically, it is any exercise that uses the large muscles of the body (arms and legs) in a rhythmic, continuous manner for at least 15-20 minutes at a moderate intensity (you are breathing somewhat hard but can still talk).

Most people can manage 15-20 minutes in the beginning. If you cannot, start with 10 minutes. What is important is to start. Do it three times a week.

Strength training

Strong and firm muscles aren't just for appearance. Many aches and pains people experience as they age are due to weak muscles. Flabby, atrophied muscles are also partly to blame for the "middle-age bulge." When your car has a smaller engine, it consumes less gas. It is the same with the body—muscles are its "engine."

Initially, you may not need any kind of resistance except the weight of your own body (arms, legs and trunk). To continue getting results as you get stronger, you can use free weights (dumbbells, ankle weights), gym machines, rubber resistance (special exercise bands), or more advanced body weight exercises (pushups, for example).

Naturally, you will be more motivated to choose exercises for what you think are the flabbiest parts of your body. This is understandable because we all want to look better.

But you also need to strengthen your other muscles. So, for a balanced workout, choose at least one exercise per major muscle group—legs and buttocks, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and abdominal muscles.

Start with one set of 12-15 repetitions. As you get stronger, you can increase to two sets or stay with one set but increasing the weight gradually.

When you first start, lift only as much as you can even if you do only three or four repetitions. Start with whatever strength you have. You'll be surprised at how fast you get stronger. Do strength training three times a week on alternating days.

Flexibility training

Stretch the same muscles that you strengthened. Hold the stretch without bouncing for at least 10 seconds. You can stretch every day if you want to.

Many experts do not recommend starting a sport if you have been "gathering moss" for some time. Strengthen your heart and muscles first. Not only will you have the physical capacity to enjoy the sport to the fullest, you will also have fewer injuries.

As for yoga and Pilates, they are not just "stretching" exercises. You can also develop stronger muscles. What yoga and Pilates cannot do, however, is give you cardiovascular stamina.

The exception is Ashtanga or power yoga, where you move from one position to another at a moderately fast rate.

Warm-up and cool-down

Treat your body with more respect than you treat your car. No conscientious car owner would dream of taking a "cold" car straight from the garage to speeds of 100 km an hour or turn the engine off at fourth gear.

The same goes for your body. Spend at least five minutes exercising at low intensity. This is your warm-up. Spend five minutes doing the same thing after your cardiovascular workout. That's the cool-down.

Only one thing at a time

Watch out for the "too much, too soon, too fast" syndrome. Have patience. You can't become fit overnight. Use the "gradual progression" concept when changing the duration, frequency, intensity and type of exercise. Increase everything gradually and change only one thing at a time.

For example, if you start walking for 15 minutes three times a week at low intensity, change either the duration (to 20 minutes), the frequency (four times a week), or the intensity (moderate intensity) but not all three at the same time. If you follow this principle, getting fit will be relatively painless.

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Valentine kisses this January

MAIKE Evers and Rafael Rossel

EVERYONE loves romance, especially when it leads to that sweet, innocent kiss that seems to hold a world of promise.

No drawn-out cheesy telenovelas here, as we're talking of those 30-second masterpieces of young love—the famous television ads put out by Close-Up toothpaste.

Prepare to do some more swooning as those beautiful faces with their lovely brilliant-white smiles get together for the first time ever in a grand Close-Up Celebration on Jan. 12.

Close-Up smiles will be exchanged among famous personalities who have graced favorite Close-Up ads through the years, from recent heartthrobs like Heart Evangelista, Kelly Misa, Bea Valdes, Karel Marquez, Kyla, Luis Manzano, Brad Turvey, Cathy da Rosa, Derek Ramsey, Issa Litton and Marco Grazzini, all the way to the stars of the classic episodes like Belinda Panelo, Cheska Diaz, Dawn Zulueta, Onemig Bondoc, Dindi Gallardo, Richard Gomez, Jobelle Salvador, Loren Legarda, Miguel Zubiri, Mia Pratts, Plinky Recto, Rudolph Yaptinchay, and Tina Revilla, among many, many others.

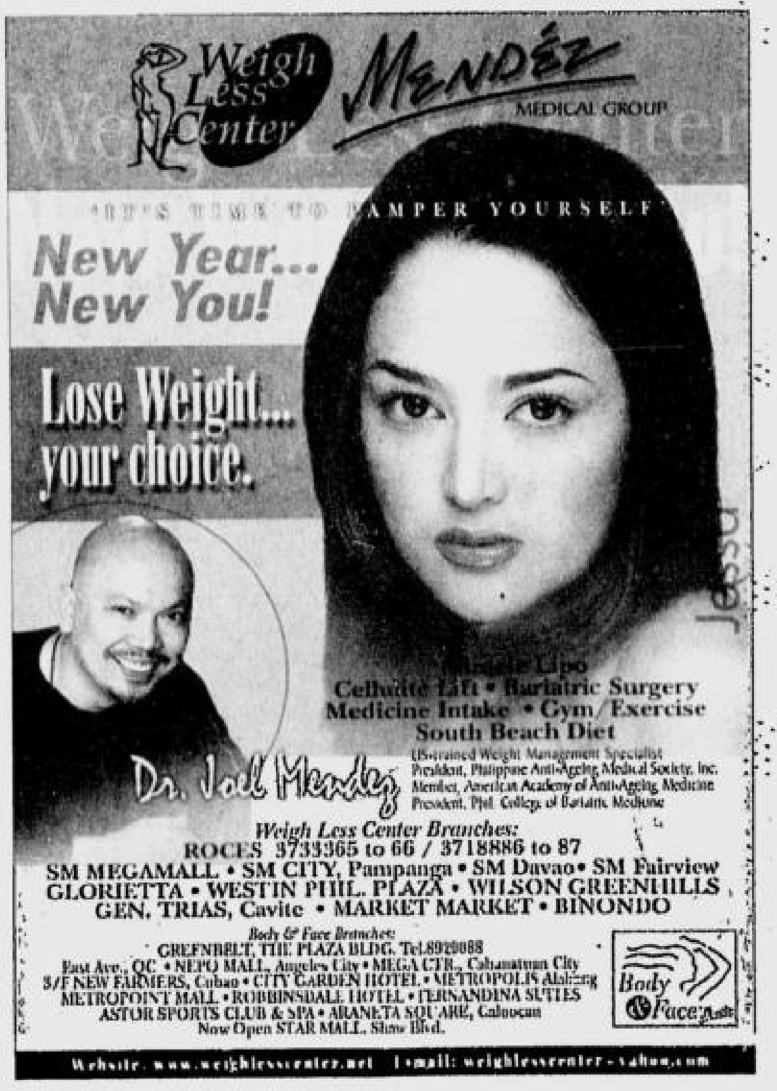
This gathering is sure to usher in an extraordinary Valentine tradition, all starting with a simple Close-Up kiss. Romance will definitely be in the air as Close-Up moments are relived.

Last year, the Philippines made the prestigious pages of Guinness Book of Records with a groundbreaking 5,327 simultaneous kisses of loving sweethearts, defeating Chile's 4,445 kissing couples. The event was co-sponsored by Close-Up.

This year, Close-Up will be holding a four-venue Valentine's celebration: Manila, Davao, Cebu and Angeles, to encourage everyone to live the Close-Up moment with that single kiss.

ROBIN da Roza and Bea Valdes

HEART Evangelista and John Prats



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GOURMANDS Darwin Yu, Ricky Ho, zNh chef Chan Chun Hung and Kevin Tam

RUTH Velasco-Co with the Red Cross' guardian angel Rosa Rosal and Chito Sobrepeña

TONI Rose Gayda-Lim, Pia Guanio, Vicky Morales and her husband, King Reyno

Cause for celebration for Chinese food lovers

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by
Alex Van Hagen
on **Kodak Max**

I JUST adore Chinese cuisine regardless of what region it comes from. So it I didn't take a lot of convincing for me to accept an invitation from popular, successful, multifaceted business entrepreneur **Arnold Co** and his gorgeous wife, brilliant achiever **Ruth Velasco**, to the opening of a brand new Chinese restaurant that all of us food lovers should celebrate.

And celebrate, we did, *palanggas*, at the fab grand opening of the already so popular Zhongnanhai Chinese Bistro, zNh for short.

The creamiest of the cream of Cosmo Manille's social scene and true gourmands showed up in their best Chinese outfits to party and, most of all, to savor the absolutely tasty Shanghai, Beijing, Szechuan, Hunan, Fujian and Cantonese delights the resto had to offer.

The opening really got rolling, dahlings, with sounds by renowned DJ **Kevin Ruiz** and performances by the Hotlegs. The affair had loads of Eastern touches, *palanggas*, like a huge Chinese scroll guest book where invitees signed their names using the traditional *maopi* (a Chinese brush). Then eye-catching Chinese jade bracelets were placed on our wrists. There were giant fortune cookies, fortune bamboo sticks and Chinese lanterns—made for a hip and nontraditional dining experience.

zNh's opening boasted an attendance list that would make any public relation outfit's dream come true.

Celebs and industry luminaries, like Metrobank president **Antonio** and **Mary Jane Abacan**; Hong Kong HSBC's hotshot **Lenny Tam**; civic-oriented women of power **Nini Licaros, Menchu Katigbak** and stock exchange queen **Vivian Yuchengco**; Robinsons Land's beautiful couple **Frederick** and **Winnie Go**; **Richard Gomez,** who dashed in late-ish; top architect **Miguel Pastor**; beautiful **Carmi Martin**; **Robert** and **Vicky Barbera**; **Paul** and **Sophia Cuyegkeng**; PS Bank treasurer **Peggy Ty-Cham** with her husband, Dr. **Terence Cham**, plus so many others too *charmante* to mention.

That grand opening night bash may have ended but the doors of the Zhongnanhai Chinese Bistro remain open, as it positions itself "as an alternative Chinese restaurant offering an extensive and diverse menu, a strong value-for-money proposition, and a new experience to the Filipino consumer," explained an enthusiastic Ruth V. Co.

Yes, *palanggas*, rush over and treat yourself at this excellent, new culinary destination, zNh, where you will definitely feast on mouth-watering multi-regional Chinese fare, and choose from 20 types of tea. Believe me, you'll be back for more.

Zhongnanhai Chinese Bistro is at the G/F, Greenbelt 2, Ayala Center, Makati.

Philips' latest

We went to lunch knowing it was going to be an exciting and fun happening. Europe's No. 1 consumer electronics company, Philips, did it again. It took the lead in television technology when it launched its latest innovation, the to-see-is-to-believe Pixel Plus 2 TV with Ambilight technology, considered Philip's most state-of-the-art TV to date.

Heading the Philips pack were consumer electronics brilliant and well-respected general manager **Angelo Valenton**; connected displays product manager **Mark Sta. Maria** and marketing services manager **Tetet Songco.**

After a superb lunch at Inter-Continental Hotel's Boulevardier, we found out that Pixel Plus 2 was the latest version of Philips' award-winning image enhancement technology, Pixel Plus, that "more than doubles the resolution of the TV set to a world record-breaking two million pixel resolution per frame," *palanggas*. Believe me that's as clear as any picture can get! Wow!

It was also the first television set to add an exciting and innovative dimension to home entertainment via Ambilight, ambient lighting. "This technology enhances the TV and the viewing environment itself by projecting background lighting in the rear of the TV onto the wall behind the set, reflecting the colors on the screen. Ambilight can generate any color level of light intensity to perfectly match your viewing preference." Now, dahlings, how's that for enlightehed viewing, *di bala?*

The launching was delightfully hosted by TV personality, Southern gent **Edu Manzano**, and always a pleasure to look at, our *palangga*, **Tessa Prieto-Valdes**. Highlighting the event was a "Dare to Compare" segment, where super game **Mark Sta. Maria**, dressed as a torero, displayed the different features of the new Pixel Plus 2 TV. Plus we got a look at the entire range of TVs, which include plasma and LCD Flat TV models.

"With the Pixel Plus 2 TV, Philips has clearly sent a strong message that the company is out to create a new standard in TV performance," proudly said Angelo Valenton.

Amen, sir.

HOTSHOT namedroppables toast our town's excellent new culinary dynasty: business entrepreneur Arnold Co, SMBA chair Francisco Licuanan III, Secretary Arthur Yap, Wendy Puyat-Hotung, Lucy Torres-Gomez, Namchow Food (Taiwan) managing director Henry Chen and everyone's Bench hero, Ben Chan

TOYOTA Manila Bay's Lulu Ty with Lou Morales

BEAUTIFUL couple Jay and Lance Gokongwei

SHU Uemura's Tina Tinio and her true love, Nami Boracay Resort's Alex Ledesma

BENJIE Rosario with Mary Ann Lumen

FUN PALS. Yrna Ileto and Princess Monjierra Alonto Disini

LUCILLE Carlos Locsin and Francis Lumen

LOVEY dovey couple Anna Sy and Luigi Bernas, with brilliant Vanna Virata

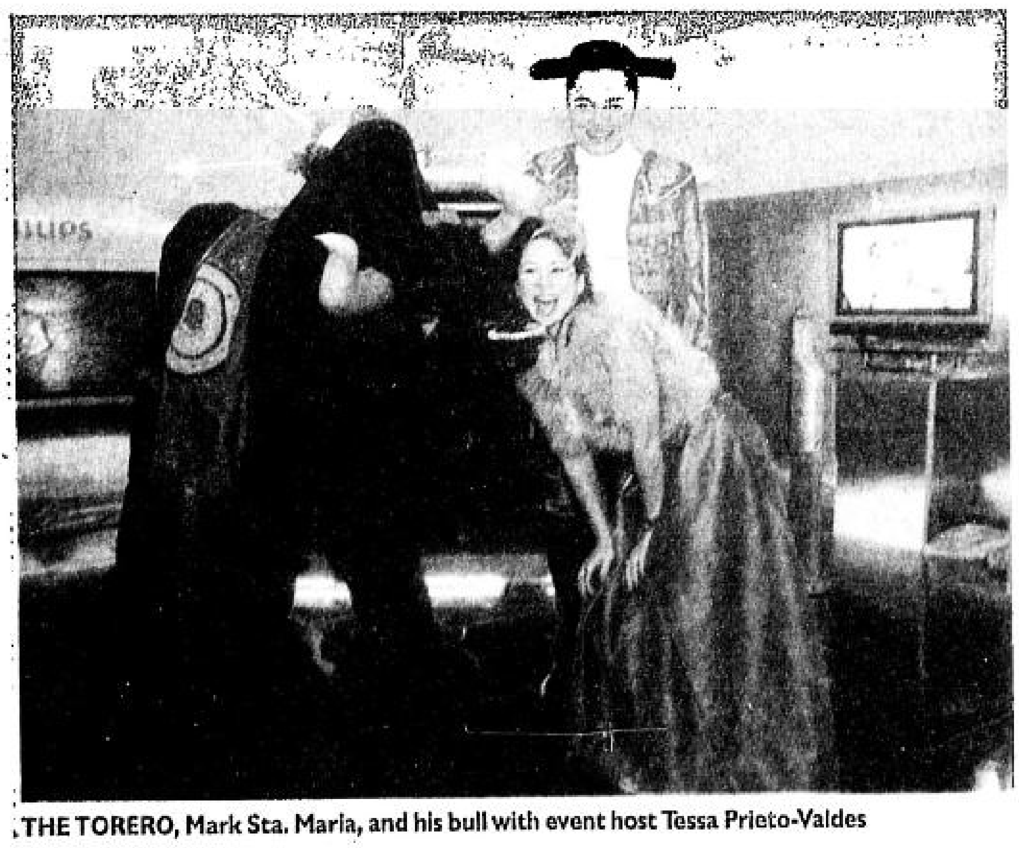
PEOPLE Asia's glam gal Joanne Ramirez

MYRNA Cruz-Fernandez, Rowena Tomeldan, Francisco Licuanan III and CJ Jesena

ANNA Sobrepeña

AUTOMATIC Center's Sammy Lim

SINGAPORE'S exotic looker Rita Dy



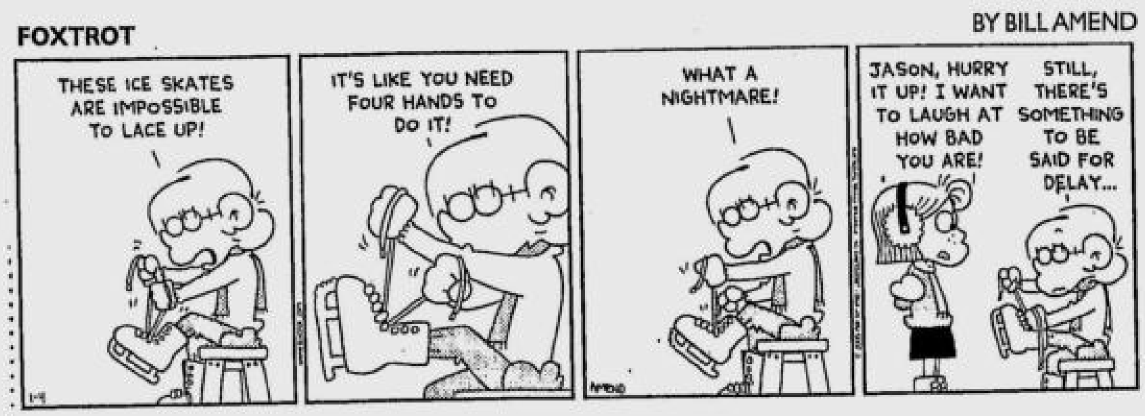
THE TORERO, Mark Sta. Maria, and his bull with event host Tessa Prieto-Valdes

PHILIPS Consumer Electronics general manager Angelo Valenton with event host Edu Manzano

TOP models Corey Wills and Rissa Samson made the Philips happening even more enjoyable.

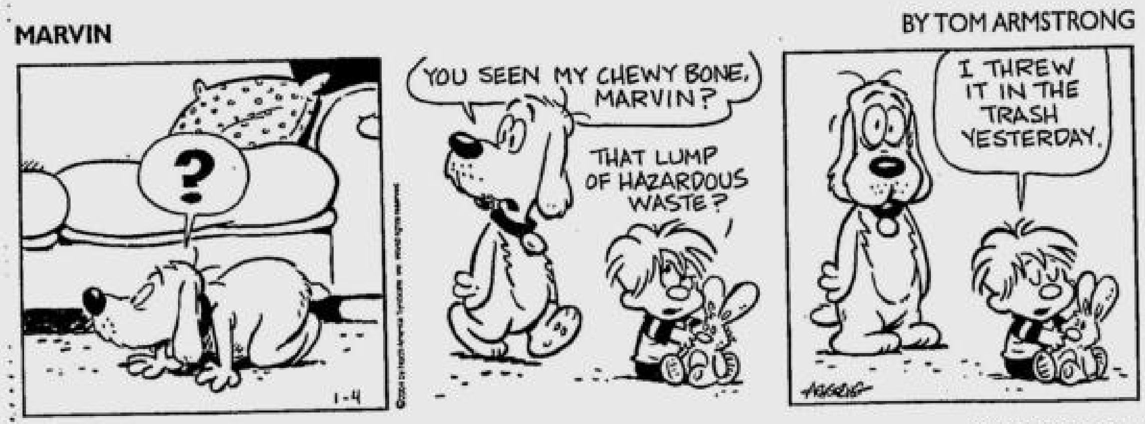
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


THESE ICE SKATES ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO LACE UP!
IT'S LIKE YOU NEED FOUR HANDS TO DO IT!
WHAT A NIGHTMARE!
JASON, HURRY IT UP! I WANT TO LAUGH AT HOW BAD YOU ARE!
STILL, THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR DELAY...
1-4

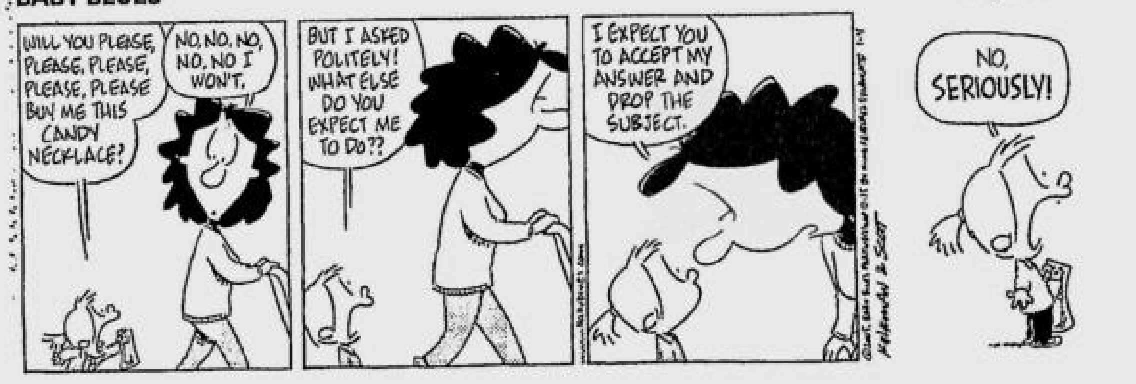
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


?
YOU SEEN MY CHEWY BONE, MARVIN?
THAT LUMP OF HAZARDOUS WASTE?
I THREW IT IN THE TRASH YESTERDAY.
1-4

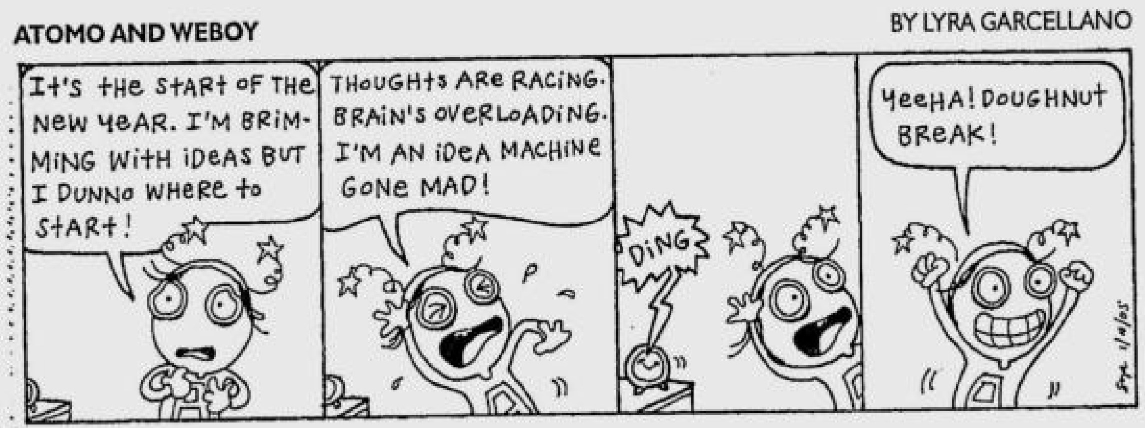
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WILL YOU PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE BUY ME THIS CANDY NECKLACE?
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO I WON'T.
BUT I ASKED POLITELY! WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO??
I EXPECT YOU TO ACCEPT MY ANSWER AND DROP THE SUBJECT.
NO, SERIOUSLY!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


It's the start of the new year. I'm brimming with ideas but I dunno where to start!
Thoughts are racing. Brain's overloading. I'm an idea machine gone mad!
DING
YeeHA! Doughnut break!
Lyra 1/4/05

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have an intellectual mind. You know how to strategize and plan ahead. This makes you an excellent problem-solver. You master specific techniques easily. Others quickly learn to depend on you. An array of choices will arise this year. You must choose only one, however. Give this careful thought.
Birthdate of: Floyd Patterson, boxer; Dyan Cannon, actress; Julia Ormond, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel so strongly about religious and political ideas today that you are downright argumentative. But this achieves nothing. Don't try to force others to your point of view. Relax.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You can do wonderful research in any area that you choose today. Your ability to delve deep and get at the truth is phenomenal. You might find some interesting answers!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid arguments with partners and close friends. Somebody wants to change you or "improve" you. Naturally, this is just meddling. You don't have to listen.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're very determined to get your way about something at work today. But wait a moment; you know that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. Remember this.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might be tempted to win a power trip with young people or children. You want to tell them how it is. But you intend to hammer it home. Lighten up! Don't let your intensity smother others. Be kind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Don't bully family members into agreeing with you or doing what you want. Be gentler. Find out what others want. Look for a win-win solution. It is always there.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): If you have to sell, teach, market or persuade today, you'll be successful! Your words will cut through anything like a hot knife through butter.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might be obsessed with a particular idea related to money and earnings. Similarly, you might be obsessed with trying to buy something. Either way, get hold of your bearings.

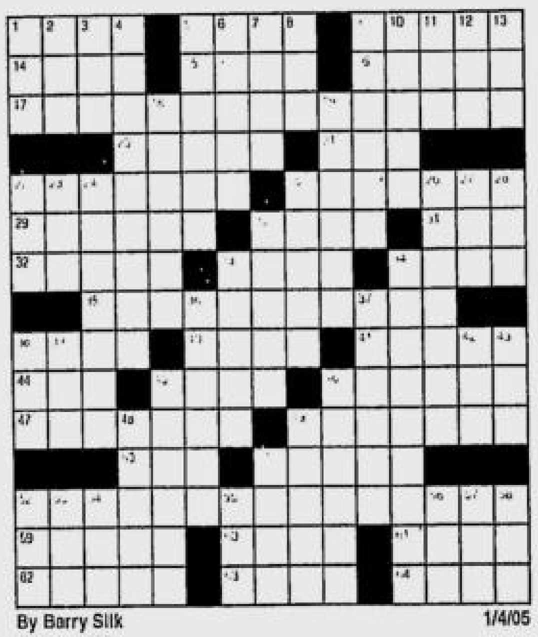
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Be careful not to be too enthusiastic or overbearing about whatever you want today. You could be coming on like gangbusters. Cool your jets a bit.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your ability to sleuth out secrets is wonderful today. Don't hesitate to do research or find new solutions to all problems. You're relentless in your search.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You have strong opinions. You can also be stubborn. (You know who you are.) Don't try to persuade friends to do something today. Be gentle.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Power struggles with parents, bosses or authority figures are likely today. Try to avoid these if you can. An expression of anger only makes everyone miserable (including you). Be patient with others.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Barry Silk
McLean, VA
1/4/05

ACROSS
1 Egyptian cobras
5 Doctrines
9 Wilson of the Beach Boys
14 Overlook
15 Within earshot
16 Eagle's nest
17 King
20 Muse of poetry
21 Psyche division
22 Real estate accounts
25 Satisfaction seeker, of a sort
29 Dutch blooms
30 Slender nail
31 Abu Dhabi, Dubai et al.
32 Rosemary or ginger
33 Musher's vehicle
34 Italian eight
35 King
38 Passion
40 TV's warrior princess
41 Spine-tingling
44 Tolkien creature
45 Shape
46 Suitors
47 "Medical Center" star
49 Gain control over
50 Despot Amin
51 May honorees
52 King
59 Short-term govt. investment
60 Biblical preposition
61 Blockhead
62 Clamorous
63 Genesis spot
64 Author Bagnold

DOWN
1 Volcanic fallout
2 Winter runner
3 Litter dropper?
4 Planet-shaped
5 Acquired relatives
6 Bleachers
7 BLT topper
8 __ Lanka
9 Caught
10 Mil. probe
11 Writer Levin
12 Volleyball filler
13 Actor Beatty
18 Push forward
19 Site of the Comstock Lode
22 UFO pilots
23 Dine
24 Meteorological conditions
25 Boxing venue
26 Woody or Arlo
27 Dig in!
28 Old Olds
30 Fair-haired
33 Silvery fish
34 City near San Diego
36 Foreign
37 Reseal a package
38 Capital of Zimbabwe?
39 Part of SASE
42 Border Patrol org.
43 Part of CBS?
45 Agricultural pest
46 Biblical strongman
48 Cambodian currency
49 Waste maker?
51 Repair
52 Cardboard box: abbr.
53 Pioneer TV-movie channel
54 A majority of V
55 Tint
56 Long, long time
57 Tenth of MDX
58 Flight info

Monday's Puzzle Solved

P	E	R	U	■	B	E	S	E	T	■	P	E	A	T
O	D	I	N	■	O	R	O	N	O	■	A	L	V	A
T	I	G	H	T	R	O	P	E	W	A	L	K	E	R
S	T	A	I	R	■	S	H	R	I	M	P	E	R	S
■	■	■	P	E	P	■	S	O	N	E	■	■	■	■
T	M	I	■	F	L	U	■	■	G	L	O	B	A	L
R	O	S	A	■	E	R	I	L	■	I	M	A	G	O
E	L	E	P	H	A	N	T	T	R	A	I	N	E	R
A	T	R	I	A	■	S	O	T	S	■	T	E	N	D
D	O	F	S	N	I	■	■	A	V	L	■	S	T	S
■	■	■	■	S	O	D	A	■	P	L	O	■	■	■
S	L	A	L	O	M	I	N	G	■	A	R	G	U	E
H	U	M	A	N	C	A	N	N	O	N	B	A	L	L
A	L	E	C	■	A	N	E	A	R	■	I	M	A	M
D	U	N	E	■	T	A	S	T	E	■	T	E	N	S

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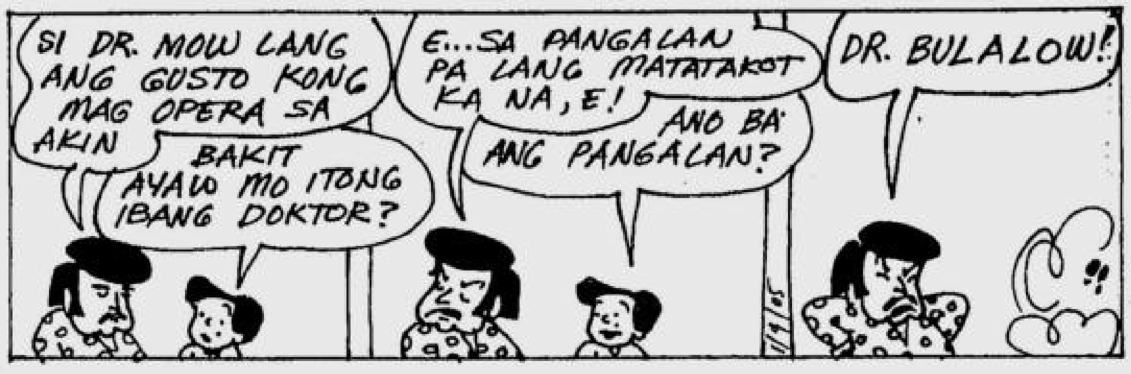
1/4/05

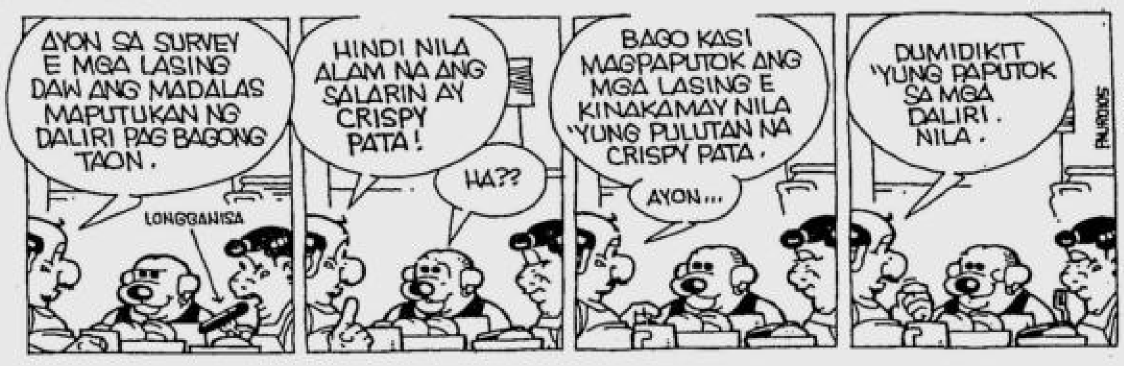
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


SI DR. MOW LANG ANG GUSTO KONG MAG OPERA SA AKIN
BAKIT AYAW MO ITONG IBANG DOKTOR?
E...SA PANGALAN PA LANG MATATAKOT KA NA, E!
ANO BA ANG PANGALAN?
DR. BULALOW!
1/4/05

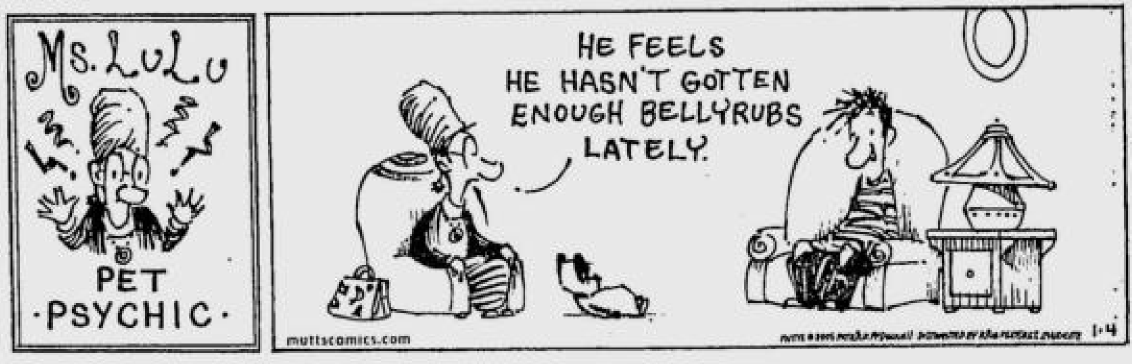
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AYON SA SURVEY E MGA LASING DAW ANG MADALAS MAPUTUKAN NG DALIRI PAG BAGONG TAON.
LONGGANISA
HINDI NILA ALAM NA ANG SALARIN AY CRISPY PATA!
HA??
BAGO KASI MAGPAPUTOK ANG MGA LASING E KINAKAMAY NILA 'YUNG PULUTAN NA CRISPY PATA.
AYON...
DUMIDIKIT 'YUNG PAPUTOK SA MGA DALIRI NILA.
PMJR

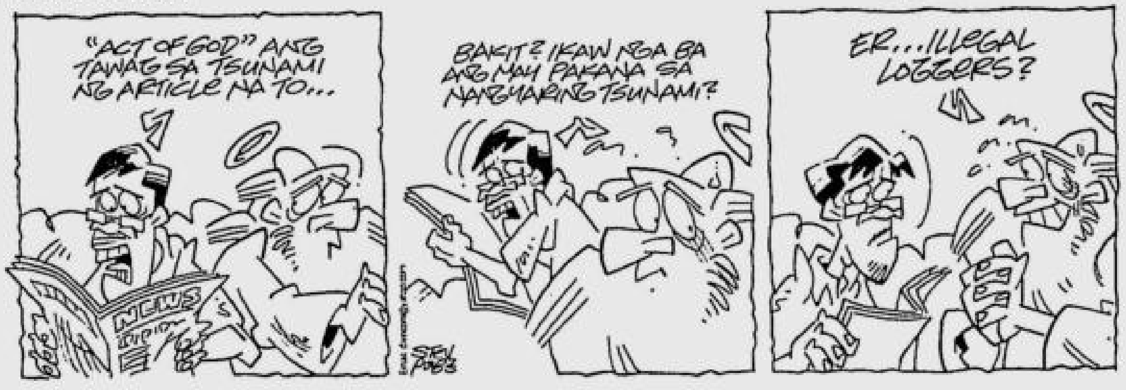
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


Ms. LuLu
PET ·PSYCHIC·
HE FEELS HE HASN'T GOTTEN ENOUGH BELLYRUBS LATELY.
muttscomics.com
1-4

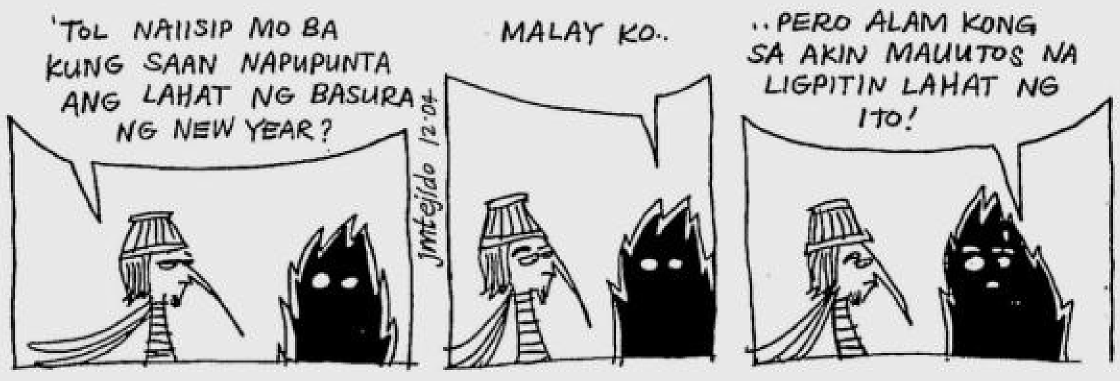
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


"ACT OF GOD" ANG TAWAG SA TSUNAMI NG ARTICLE NA TO...
NEWS
BAKIT? IKAW NGA BA ANG MAY PAKANA SA NANGYARING TSUNAMI?
ER...ILLEGAL LOGGERS?
STEV PABS

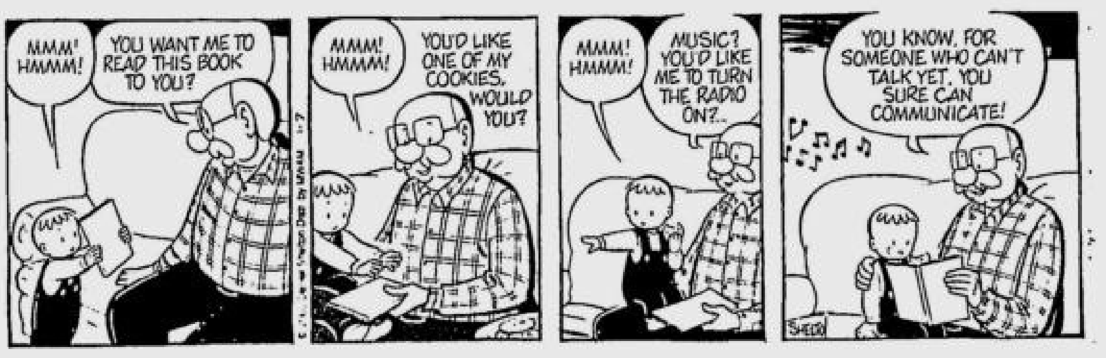
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


'TOL NAIISIP MO BA KUNG SAAN NAPUPUNTA ANG LAHAT NG BASURA NG NEW YEAR?
jmtejido 12·04
MALAY KO..
..PERO ALAM KONG SA AKIN MAUUTOS NA LIGPITIN LAHAT NG ITO!

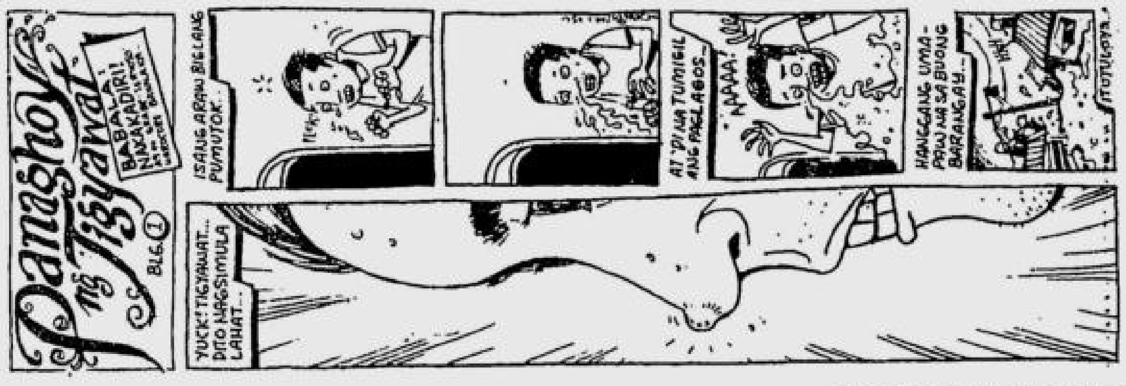
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


MMM! HMMM!
YOU WANT ME TO READ THIS BOOK TO YOU?
MMM! HMMM!
YOU'D LIKE ONE OF MY COOKIES. WOULD YOU?
MMM! HMMM!
MUSIC? YOU'D LIKE ME TO TURN THE RADIO ON?..
YOU KNOW, FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN'T TALK YET, YOU SURE CAN COMMUNICATE!
SHELTON

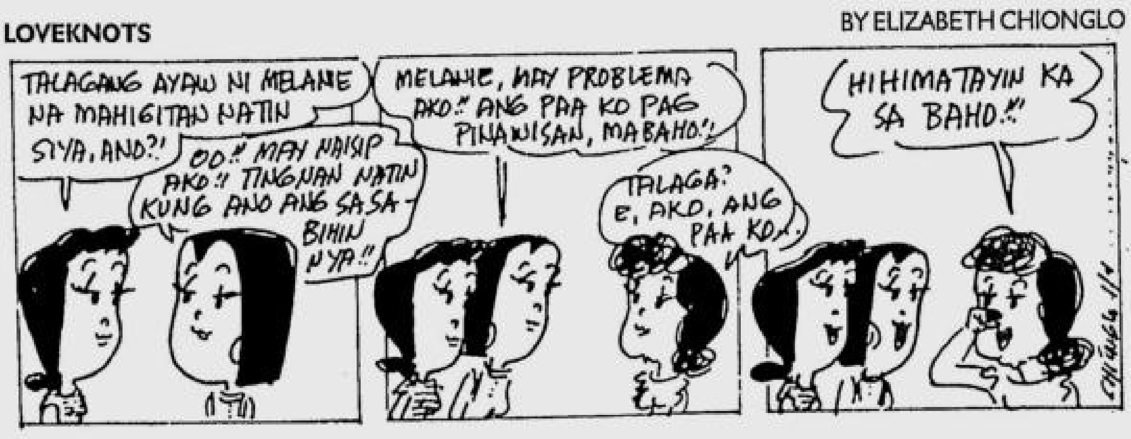
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Panaghoy ng Tigyawat
BABALA! NAKAKADIRI!
BLG. 1
ISANG ARAW BIGLANG PUMUTOK.
AT 'DI NA TUMIGIL ANG PAGLAGOS..
AAAAA!
HANGGANG UMA-POW NA SA BUONG BARANGAY...
YUCK! TIGYAWAT... DITO NAGSIMULA LAHAT...

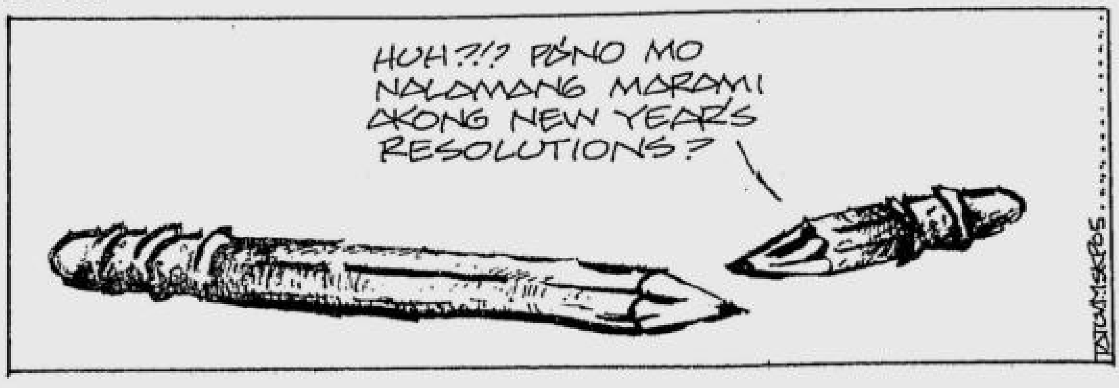
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

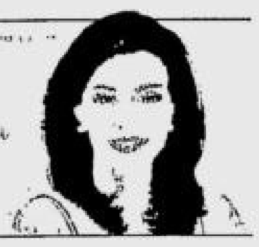

TALAGANG AYAW NI MELANE NA MAHIGITAN NATIN SIYA, ANO?!
OO!! MAY NAISIP AKO!! TINGNAN NATIN KUNG ANO ANG SASABIHIN NYA!!
MELANIE, MAY PROBLEMA AKO!! ANG PAA KO PAG PINAWISAN, MABAHO!!
TALAGA? E, AKO, ANG PAA KO..
HIHIMATAYIN KA SA BAHO!!
CHIONGLO 1/4

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HUH?!? PANO MO NALAMANG MARAMI AKONG NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS?
TATUM:SKRBS

Fountain of youth is within you



INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

KNOWLEDGE is the key that opens the door to many possibilities—one of them is your health, which is directly connected to your beauty. The fountain of youth can easily be tapped under the right conditions: wanting and doing.

Every discipline has its disciples. The discipline of wellness is for those committed to the goal of optimum health. And every disciple should aim for the top.

Let's look at the essentials:

Diet. Simply put, it's the food we eat. Basic food guides suggest generous portions of vegetables (the rawer and fresher the better) and fruits.

Food should be your friend, not your enemy. That's why diet fads are looked upon with suspicion because they deprive the body of optimal nutrition. Instead of totally eliminating certain food groups from your eating plan, simply minimize the servings. (Example: If your normal average intake of rice is one cup, cut it by half.)

Cutting back on your oil, fat and sugar intakes should make you shed pounds gradually over a period of six months. When you eat lighter, you will feel lighter. Juices should be part of your regimen. Start with the universal bestseller and all-around health booster, apple and carrot.

Substitute junk foods with healthy snack items like nuts, dried fruits and no-fry chips of the baked variety.

Exercise. You have to move more and eat less. If there is one powerful youth-enhancing tip for everyone, it is to make exercise part of your lifestyle. The skin is a major detoxification organ, and sweating is a means of eliminating toxins in your system.

It is said there is an exercise for everyone. Among others, you have a choice of badminton, swimming, basketball, jogging, gym workout or just simply brisk-walking. Choose the one that best suits your personality.

Hydration. Sufficient supply of fluids should be at the of your wellness checklist. Make clean purified water a necessity and not an afterthought.

Act happy. Pretend you are happy with yourself and your life. Often, when happiness seems to elude you, it is all a matter of psy-war. Think happy to act happy. Before you know it, your aura has become so radiant your happiness will come from within (the real source of happiness) and not without. Your affirmation: "I am a wellspring of joy."

R&R. Rest and relaxation go hand in hand. Go on that oft-postponed long vacation. You owe it to yourself. And while studies show that even vacations can get stressful, take heart! At least it's welcome stress!

Silence saves. Get reacquainted with silence. Peace can only come from within. Gift yourself with the practice of silence. It is only in this quiet corner of the self when the soul speaks. Drown out the noise to allow silence to emerge.

Pamper yourself. Have your fair share of pampering treatments from the simplest massage to the most sophisticated super beauty rituals at a spa. Just applying generous portions of virgin coco oil is enough to make you feel like silk to the touch.

Love and light!

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Filipinos have lost their creativity

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime T. Licauco

EVERY child is highly creative. Notice the way he will make every effort to find out how things work.

Give a child a toy and he will soon break it down to see how and why it moves. But as the child grows older he loses his unique natural creative functioning and begins to think and act like everybody else.

It seems this has something to do with how the human brain works.

Dr. Roger Sperry, a biologist, discovered that the two hemispheres of the brain performed different functions. He accidentally made this remarkable finding when he made an incision on the corpus callosum of hopelessly incurable epileptic patients.

The corpus callosum is composed of around 300 million brain cells that serve as communication links between the two halves of the brain. By making an incision on the corpus callosum, Sperry in effect severed the contact between the two halves. That's when the two different functions of the brain became apparent.

Nobel laureate

What exactly did Sperry find out that was so remarkable it earned him the prestigious Nobel Prize for medicine, although he was not a physician? He found, for example, that the left half of the brain was responsible for verbal thinking—for logical, analytical, serial and qualitative thinking. It was also involved in abstract thoughts or ideas.

The right hemisphere was responsible for non-verbal thinking, such as intuition, gut feel, imagination and creativity. It was involved in synthesis or seeing things as a whole. It also gave us depth and perspective. It was responsible for space relations. It thought in terms of images, pictures and symbols.

Without the right brain we would not be able to see the whole or bigger picture. But, without the left brain, we would not know whether what we were thinking of was right or wrong, logical or irrational.

We need both halves of the brain to function well in the physical world.

Instinctive

When we are born, our right brain is dominant. We cannot think yet in logical or abstract terms; we can only think mainly of concrete, immediate things. Thinking is mainly instinctive because we need it to survive.

As children, we are very curious about our immediate environment. We try things out to see how they work. We touch a lighted candle and withdraw our fingers when we feel pain. We learn things by doing or actually experiencing them. Our curiosity about the world we live in is inexhaustible.

As we grow older, our left, analytical brain begins to function more fully and even dominate our thinking. We begin to love the familiar and the routine because it is much easier to function when we can anticipate how things will go instead of being surprised all the time.

The unknown and the unfamiliar become threatening to our already patterned way of thinking. We begin to fear or dislike to experiment and adhere to what is established by convention or by authority or by tradition.

Nation of conformists

So if a group of people, like a nation, will not encourage a greater number of its population to use the right intuitive and creative side of their brains, that nation becomes a place of conformists or conventional and boring thinkers. These people prefer to think in terms of what is acceptable or conventional rather than what is new, intuitive, creative and untried.

If a large group of people begins to think like everybody else, there will be little progress. That indeed will be tragic. They will be overrun by the more progressive, creative countries. They will be left behind.

The greatest asset of a nation is its people. Yet little is being done by our officials, by our government nor by the private sector to truly harness the tremendous creative potential of our people. We have chosen to merely follow the thinking, the technology and the ways of the Western world. We have forgotten our true heritage, our creativity, our imagination, our values and tradition as a people. It is time for us to wake up!

CLIMASHELL half-zip wind vest

LONG-SLEEVED ClimaCool mesh

CLIMAWARM vest

Golf wear for all kinds of weather

SO addicted to golf, you'll play in any kind of weather? Adidas Golfwear will keep you swinging happily in rain or wind, or just plain heat. It will have the right gear for you come rain or shine.

The ultimate in luxury performance golfwear, Adidas Golf is a great choice on and off the green.

This season Adidas Golf has a great range of new styles. Their outerwear technology will keep you cool and dry in all weather conditions—a must to have that winning edge over the competition.

Choose from Adidas Golf's outerwear collection that suits every weather condition:

Adidas ClimaShell is designed to keep you on course no matter what. It combines a durable, soft coating and Teflon finish for a protective layer that repels water while allowing body vapor to escape, keeping any golfer dry and comfortable. ClimaShell Rain gear is lightweight and designed to pack easily into even the most crowded storage pockets.

Adidas ClimaShell Wind protects you from the wind chill factor. The shield is made of tightly woven, polyester microfiber filaments that are naturally lightweight, breathable and resistant to both wind and water. It is coated with an exterior Teflon finish that enhances water repelling without sacrificing breathability.

Adidas ClimaShell Storm is serious all-weather gear engineered to keep you dry and comfortable even in the worst storm, including fierce wind and water, without sacrificing breathability, durability and softness. Every seam is sealed, and surfaces are brushed for quiet and softness.

For golf trips to temperate countries, Adidas ClimaWarm gives the comfort of cotton with the performance of synthetic-fiber technology. Microfleece fibers trap air to keep you warm but allow moisture to escape so you won't need bulky, heavyweight garments that restrict movement.

Adidas Golf is available at TaylorMade-Adidas Golf shops at 3/F Makati Golf Club, Malugay Street, Makati and City Golf Driving Range, Julia Vargas Street, Pasig; Golf Depot, Promenade, Alabang Town Center; Bravo Golf at Park Square and Alabang Town Center; and Adidas concept stores in Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Rockwell, SM Megamall and Westin Philippine Plaza.

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Lecture on fetal cell therapy, Jan. 8-9

SAM Baxas, M.D., a Swiss anti-aging specialist based in Reno, Nevada, will discuss "Fetal Cell Therapy in Anti-Aging and Treatment of Diabetes" during the second International Convention on Homeopathy and Homotoxicology, Jan. 8-9, Waterfront Airport Hotel and Casino, Mactan, Lapu-Lapu, Cebu.

Baxas has been a general medicine practitioner in Key Biscayne, Florida, for the past 30 years. He is a member of the American Medical Association, Dade County and Florida Medical Societies, and 10 different alternative medicine specialty groups in Germany, Switzerland and the United States.

The convention, sponsored by the Philippine College of Integrative Medicine and Homotoxicology, will also feature as speakers Peter J. VandersSchaar, M.D., Ph.D. (The Netherlands); Corazon D. Ibarra, M.D.; Eleonore Blaurock-Busch, Ph.D (Germany); Anita Baxas, M.D. (Switzerland); and Mark A. Schauss, MBA, DB (US).

The convention is open to medical practitioners and students. Call 8339142 or 8341054 or e-mail ibarrabiomed@edsamail.com.ph; or call 6332255/2533707.

Free checkup for senior citizens

BOROUGH Medical Care Institute in Eastwood City, Libis, QC, will offer free eyes, ears, nose and throat checkups for senior citizens, starting January, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., every Wednesday and Thursday.

Patients have to present senior citizen cards.

Other people can also avail of discounts on consultation fees and certain diagnostic or therapeutic procedures like comprehensive eye checkups; cataract and glaucoma screening; eyeglass prescription; ear, nose and throat examination; sinusitis evaluation; thyroid gland evaluation; head and neck cancer screening and other eye, ear, nose and throat procedures.

Specialists are available for consultation Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

Borough Medical Care Institute is accredited with PhilHealth and affiliated with major health insurance providers (HMOs). It is located at the 6/F Cybermall Building, Eastwood City, Libis, QC. Call 6871369, 6871345 or 6871779.

ENTERTAINMENT Metro

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'They like my free spirit, but they try to rein me in'

By Jocelyn Valle
Contributor

HIS FIRST and only marriage so far lasted only eight months, but Raymond Bagatsing looks forward to another.

"Then again, I'm not good at planning things like that," he told INQUIRER Entertainment recently. "I come from a broken family. I never really saw how being a couple works. Everything was a theory to me. I had to read a lot of self-help books. When you're already in a relationship, your instincts take over you."

This is not an apology, he clarified.

"I'm not saying I'm bad," he said. "It's just that I grew up carefree. My mother migrated to Australia. My father was working all the time. I went anywhere I wanted. My girlfriend could never keep me in one place. I have so many friends. I enjoy going out. If there's no father and no mother, why should you stay home?

"That's how I got used to having a world away from the house, meeting people, having new experiences."

Raymond's parents split up when he was only 5 years old. He went to live with his grandmother in Nueva Ecija. At age 12, he reunited with his mother in Australia and returned to the Philippines two years later.

Then he tried show business, doing action movies at first. His career failed to take off, as he kept going back to the Land Down Under.

New directions

He finally got the industry's attention when he focused on being a dramatic actor, starting with "Goodbye, America," a co-production between ABS-CBN and a Hollywood company.

His citations now include Urian Best Actor awards for his portrayal of the bad son in Marilou Diaz-Abaya's "Milagros" (1998) and the title role in Lav Diaz's "Serafin Geronimo: Ang Kriminal ng Barrio Concepcion" (1999).

In early 2002, after a whirlwind courtship, Raymond married fellow thespian Lara Fabregas, first in civil rites and then in an Ananda Marga wedding ceremony in Tagaytay. When they split up, Lara moved to London.

Although he was not in a relationship at the moment, Raymond said, he was sure he would eventually find the right woman.

"One thing I've learned is to treasure every connection that I make," he said. "I just need to find somebody who has the same spirit, or who is as confused as I am."

The broodingly handsome actor described himself as lovable, "because I need so much love." But he explained: "It's hard to contain me, but people always try. They like me for my free spirit, but when they're with me, they try to rein me in. I usually indulge them until I can't breathe anymore."

Restless nature

His restless nature likewise stirs him to explore territories outside acting. He sings and writes songs. In fact, he fronts a band called Raymond Bagatsing and the Bandidos. Music was his first love, anyway, he said.

"My father plays the guitar. I must have gotten the interest from him. But while I was growing up, I hated taking formal lessons. In my early 20s, I finally studied classical guitar. Then from 2001 to 2002, I studied with the dean of the UP College of Music, focusing on the different techniques in singing."

Not to boast, but Raymond said he could do standards like Michael Bublé and an assortment of pop-rock acts, including John Meyer. Years ago, he recorded a cut in Viktoria's album.

Now, he's one of the featured artists in a tribute CD for the late Rio Diaz titled "The Joys of Healing." His contribution is "Similar Journey."

Despite these positive developments in his music, Raymond insisted that his film and TV work are still his top priorities. He hosts ABS-CBN's "Nginiig," about paranormal phenomena, which airs Saturday nights. The show has been cited by the Star Awards for TV and the Asian Television Awards.

Spirits, not ghosts

Raymond was born Catholic but became a born-again Christian, and then converted to Buddhism.

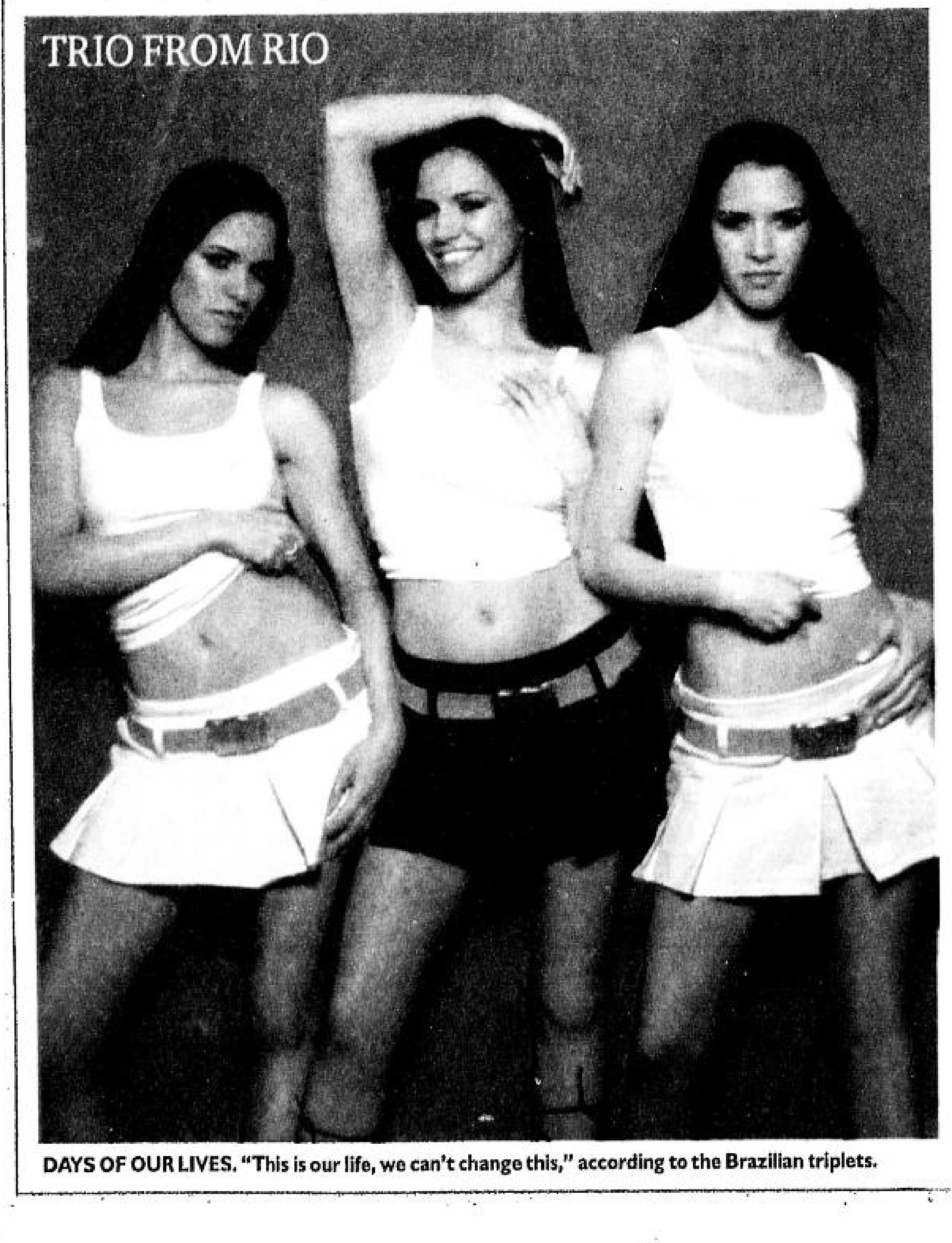
"I wonder," he said, "if the ['Nginiig'] producers knew I was a meditator and vegetarian before they got me for the job."

The actor explained: "[For people who follow Eastern philosophies], there's no such thing as ghosts. But there are spirits. And they are not around to make life miserable, since life is already miserable on its own. The spirits are just moving about because they don't have [material] bodies. Meanwhile, the human mind is so powerful that it can control and give energy to a spirit."

Raymond said he had doubts about accepting the project but that he was also open to new experiences that might enhance or challenge his beliefs, so he took it.

"I believe in spirits but I have never seen anything like a *manananggal*, for instance. On the other hand, people in Nueva Ecija where my grandmother lived said dwarves had given her healing powers. They also said our family had an amulet that had been passed on from generation to generation. Then I moved to Australia, which is very western, and new questions cropped up. Maybe 'Nginiig' can help me find some more answers."

BAGATSING. "I've learned to treasure every connection I make. I just need to find somebody who has the same spirit, or who is as confused as I am."



DAYS OF OUR LIVES. "This is our life, we can't change this," according to the Brazilian triplets.

'We just want to make people happy'

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

BRAZILIAN triplets Thayana, Thaisa and Thaina Carvalho—a.k.a. the Brazilian pop group T-Rio—recently visited the country as part of the Asian promo tour for their BMG Records-released debut album, "Choopeta (Lollipop)."

The title track is a bouncy remake of a well-known, decades-old song from their native country. It's also a current bubblegum radio staple that has spawned a dance contest on the TV variety show, "Eat Bulaga."

"It's about the family," said Thaisa of the song. "It talks about a mother and her children—a festive, happy song."

Thayana added, "It was [originally done by] singer Carmen Miranda back in 1939. We wanted to pay her a tribute in our album, so we started with a song by her. She did songs in Portuguese [that] paid tribute to Brazil."

The trio hails from Rio de Janeiro, hence the name. They have been inseparable since they started to hone their talents as children. They were most comfortable working as a unit early on, so pursuing separate careers later wasn't even an option.

"This is our life; we can't change this," said Thaina. "What we're doing now is what we've done all along, although on a larger scale."

By age nine, the Carvalho sisters were taking up drama classes. Five years later, they were working professionally in various local musicals. They landed the deal for this first record project when they turned 19.

Being different

One-hit pop imports such as the Cheeky Girls and Las Ketchup are nothing new to Filipino audiences, but the sisters hope to distinguish themselves from similarly packaged all-female pop acts. They are proud to have penned eight original songs for this album, to start with, and they wish to be recognized as a group that can do everything.

"Every group is different," explained Thaina. "Even if they sing [in] the same style, every group has its own personality. We think that our album is different because we never stopped singing in Portuguese. We were influenced by bossa nova, and that's great."

Living in France has allowed the 20-year-olds to weave different artistic touches into their music and to be fluent in the language, according to Thaina.

"We lived in Paris for two years, so for this album, we wrote about the differences between the experiences we had there, and those we had in Brazil," said Thaina. "We have learned the culture of France, and [now on this tour] we are learning about Asian culture. In our songs, we wrote about Brazil; we want to show off our culture to the world. That's very important."

Universal melody

The girls describe their music as a mix of Brazilian and French influences, plus contemporary R&B. They say they enjoy listening to American artists Alicia Keys, Lauryn Hill, Usher, and the Philippines' very own Billy Crawford. T-Rio also hopes to be internationally known, even if they hardly sing in English.

"We think the language of a song is very specific, but melody is universal," explained Thaisa. "Anyone can listen to the melody and love the song, even if they don't understand what we are saying."

The only English track in "Choopeta" is a cover of Peter Cetera's "If You Leave Me Now," sung with Michael Jackson's nephews, the trio known as 3T.

The boy band is "huge in France," according to Thaina. "We listened to their songs and loved them. We went to their concert, we talked to them and told them, 'Oh, we're preparing our album.' We invited them to drop by the studio to listen to our music.

WE JUST/2

Special 'Harry Potter' VCD pack

"HARRY POTTER and the Prisoner of Azkaban"

WARNER Home Videos has released "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" in a special VCD pack.

The movie, which grossed P80 million on its weekend opening in the Philippines, depicts an adventure that leads to the truth about the death of Harry's parents.

The two previous Harry Potter movies in the series—"Sorcer's Stone" and "Chamber of Secrets"—are part of the package.

In the first movie, Harry learns on his 11th birthday that he is the orphaned son of two powerful wizards, and that he possesses magical powers on his own.

"Chamber of Secrets" is about his second year at Hogwarts sorcery school, when a bloody writing on the wall announces, "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened."

The exclusive limited edition package is available at all Odyssey outlets.

Young man tries to change his future, with grim effects, in 'Butterfly Effect'

WHEN fate deals you a bad card, don't you sometimes wish you could turn back the hands of time and make the better choice?

It's a premise that sounds simple in theory, but actually has far more complex implications. Assuming that time travel was indeed possible, changing even just one past event could get one entangled in an intricate web of even more catastrophic proportions.

This fascinating treatise on cause and effect forms the central thesis of "The Butterfly Effect," a wildly ambitious mind-bender of a movie starring Ashton Kutcher, Amy Smart, William Lee Scott, Elden Henson, John Patrick Amedori, Eric Stoltz and Logan Lerman.

Part-"Twilight Zone" and part-"Back to the Future," "The Butterfly Effect" takes its name from a premise of chaos theory: A butterfly flapping its wings in North Africa could cause a typhoon half-a-world away.

The movie applies this theory to the lives of four children who have been marred by tragedy. When one of them finds that he can go back in time to make changes, he tries to improve the present by altering the past.

Co-directors Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber have fashioned a movie that not only entertains but asks us to consider the consequences of our own actions.

"The Butterfly Effect" is not a romantic comedy, nor does it show the parallel evolution of different universes. The film follows Evan (Ashton Kutcher) as he meddles in his own time stream, changing his future from grim to grimmer even as he remembers all of the permutations he has been through.

Perhaps the best thing about "The Butterfly Effect" is the intelligence brought to such a tricky premise. In the wrong hands, the plot could have easily become cheesy, preposterous and even laughable.

Gruber and Bress refuse to fall into this trap at every corner, treating their characters and situations with maturity.

Touchy subjects, such as pedophilia, child molestation, animal cruelty and a relatively harmless prank gone wrong are treated with the utmost seriousness in a non-exploitative manner, as its uncompromising portrait of adolescent rebellion, fear and loyalty.

"The Butterfly Effect" is now available on original VHS and VCD and is distributed nationwide by C-Interactive Digital Entertainment.

'We just want . . .'

From page 1

We wanted to do a duet with them. They did drop by, and they liked our music, too. We chose [to work on] this song in English."

While T-Rio shares a single artistic vision, the triplets acknowledge that certain traits make them distinct from each other.

"There is little difference in our personalities," said Thaisa. "Thayana is the most 'Zen'; she has no stress. Thaina is the quickest and most anxious. They say I'm the funniest."

Thayana added, "We don't always agree with each other. This is when we're writing songs. But Thaisa, she's funny because she tells a joke and we start to laugh, so we stop fighting!"

But they have never, ever fought over guys. "No," they confirmed in unison, laughing.

"We don't have the same taste in boys," said Thaina. "That's strange, but it's true."

Nor have they taken advantage of the fact that they are triplets to deliberately confuse people.

"Usually, people can't tell who's who," said Thayana. "But we are very gentle. We say, for instance, 'No, it isn't me.' It always happens. And we never used our being triplets to switch boys."

Boys and looks are not the most important things for them, anyway.

"What we really want is to make all our listeners happy," she added. "People have given us their positive energy, so we want to give it back to them."

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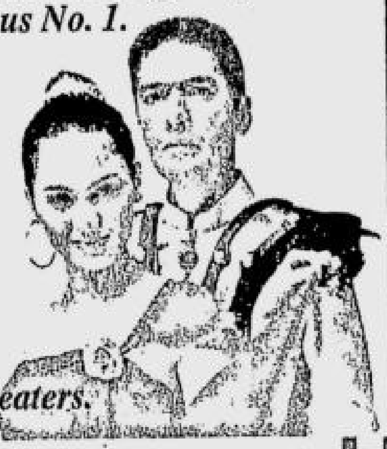

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8 MANO PO 3
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10 ENTENG KABISOTE
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
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8 SIGAW

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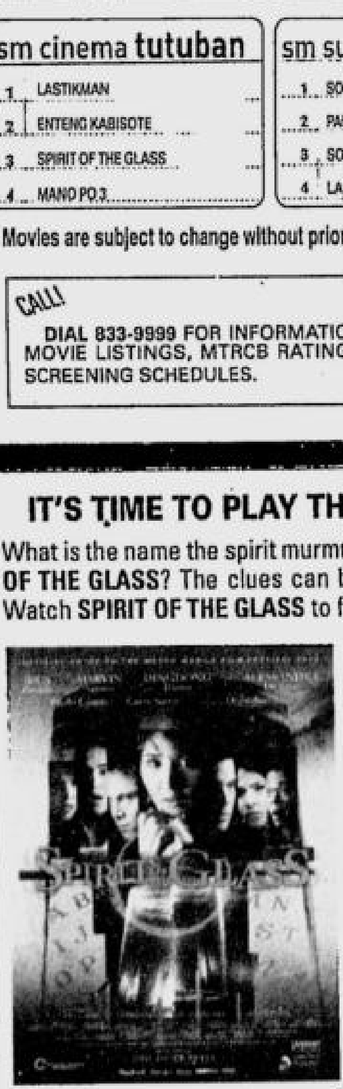
What is the name the spirit murmurs everytime they haunt them in the movie **SPIRIT OF THE GLASS**? The clues can be found below. Can you decipher the message? Watch **SPIRIT OF THE GLASS** to find out.



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Thousands mark death anniversary of pop diva

HONG KONG—About 7,000 fans of the late Chinese pop diva Anita Mui marked the first anniversary of her death at a star-studded commemoration concert, said the South China Morning Post Thursday.

Local stars sang Mui's greatest hits, with performers including Andy Hui, Hacken Lee and Miriam Yeung. Concert organizers also showed footage of Mui winning a talent contest in 1982.

Proceeds of the concert will go toward a proposed museum honoring Mui, according to the Post.

Mui died Dec. 30, 2003, of complications from cervical cancer.

The Hong Kong native won legions of fans in the Chinese-speaking world with her deep, melancholy voice. Her frequently changing image drew comparisons to Madonna.

She also had a distinguished acting career, winning Taiwan's Golden Horse award for Best Actress in 1987 for her role as a tormented ghost in the movie "Rouge."

AP

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SO HAPPY TOGETHER PG13	**AISHITE IMASU 1941** PG13 1:20,3:35,5:50,8:05	**MANO PO 3** GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40

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3	**ENTENG KABISOTE** 12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30, 11:10 GP
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② **ENTENG KABISOTE**
FS 11:20PM, 2PM, 4:40PM, 7:20PM, LMF 10PM (GP)

③ **SPIRIT OF THE GLASS**
FS 11:40AM, 2PM, 4:20PM, 6:40PM, LMF 9PM (PG-13)

④ **HAPPY TOGETHER**
(PG-13)

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NOW SHOWING

AISHITE IMASU	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
ENTENG KABISOTE	1:00 3:55 6:55 9:45
LASTIKMAN	10:55 12:00 1:10 2:15 3:25 4:30 5:40 6:45 7:55 9:00
MANO PO 3	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
PANAGHOY SA SUBA	1:55 4:20 6:45 9:10
SIGAW	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
SO HAPPY TOGETHER	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15

ALI MALL CINEMAS

3	EQUIPPED WITH Dolby	SIGAW	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
4	EQUIPPED WITH SDDS	ENTENG KABISOTE	10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00
5	EQUIPPED WITH dts	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
6	EQUIPPED WITH Dolby	MANO PO 3	11:05 1:20 3:35 5:50 8:05
7	EQUIPPED WITH Dolby	PANAGHOY SA SUBA	10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00

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Jan. 7	PBA ALL FILIPINO CUP
Jan. 9	PBA ALL FILIPINO CUP
Jan. 12	PBA ALL FILIPINO CUP
Jan. 16	PBA ALL FILIPINO CUP
Jan. 29	Martin & Patti Concert

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MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	SALAT SA LIGAYA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	AISHITE MASU (1941)
B	CLOSED
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA 1,2,3&4	NATIONAL TREASURE / BRIDGET JONES / SPIDERMAN 2 / SHREK 2
PREMIERE THEATRE	THE INCREDIBLES
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KALABIT
CINEMA-2	SALAT
CINEMA-3	ONE MISSED CALL
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HAROLD & KUMAR
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	BAD SANTA
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	HONEY
CINEMA-15	B'CUZ OF U
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-1	PASIYAM
CINEMA-2	BRIDGET JONES
CINEMA-4	POLAR EXPRESS
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 MANO PO 3 • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50
3 LASTIKMAN
11:50 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:50
4 SIGAW
11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:40
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00
6 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
7 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
8 AISHITE IMASU
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:30
10 MANO PO 3
11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

ERMITA 536 7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE
11:15 1:50 4:25 7:00 9:40
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
3 AISHITE IMASU
10:10 12:15 2:15 4:20 6:25 8:50 10:00
4 LASTIKMAN
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:10 12:15 2:15 4:20 6:25 8:25 10:00
7 MANO PO 3
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 MANO PO 3
10:00 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 8:45 10:35
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:10 12:40 3:10 5:40 8:10 10:30
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50 8:15 10:30
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50 8:15 10:30
6 LASTIKMAN
10:10 12:40 3:10 5:40 8:10 10:30
7 AISHITE IMASU
10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50 8:15 10:35
8 SIGAW
10:00 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 8:45 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 SIGAW
11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
2 MANO PO 3
11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
3 LASTIKMAN
10:15 12:45 3:15 5:45 8:25
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10:40 1:05 3:30 5:55 8:25
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:15 12:40 3:15 5:50 8:25
8 AISHITE IMASU
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:00

PIONEER 687-5378

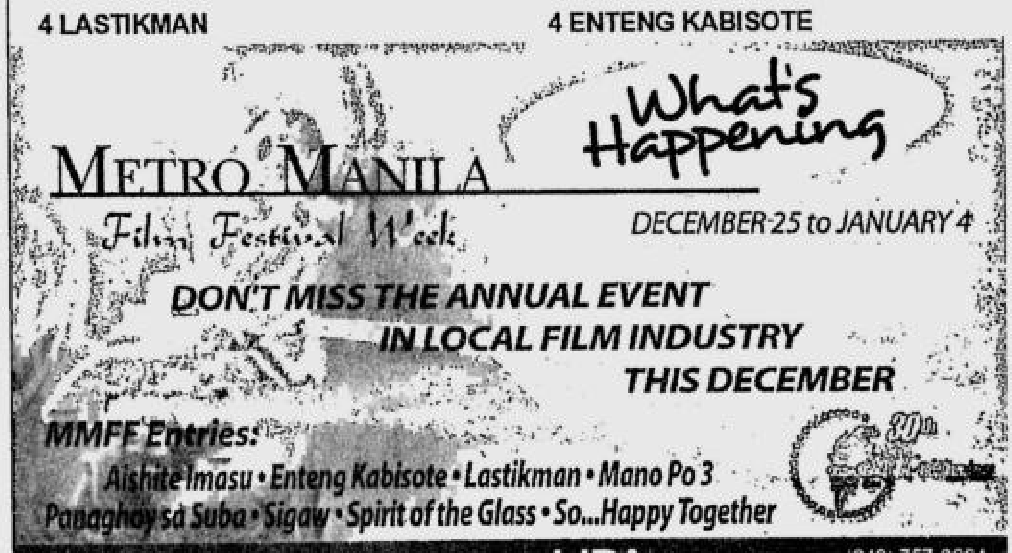
1 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 SIGAW
4 MANO PO 3

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 LASTIKMAN

CAINTA 240-4661

1 MANO PO 3
2 SIGAW
3 LASTIKMAN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE



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1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SIGAW
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 LASTIKMAN

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SIGAW
4 AISHITE IMASU
5 LASTIKMAN

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 SIGAW
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MANO PO 3

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 MANO PO 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 MANO PO 3
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ENETNG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

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"SEX AND THE CITY" ended its sixth—and final—season in February.

COURTESY TBS

Sad goodbyes for TV favorites

IT WAS a year of sad goodbyes in US television for long-time favorites such as "Frasier," "Friends," and "Sex and the City," and a year when several hot new shows were welcomed by TV audiences who tuned in for all the action on "The O.C.," "Desperate Housewives," and "Lost."

Three out

"Sex and the City," which spent its six years on the air proving that women can have sex like men, was the first of the three series to say goodbye on Feb. 22. After years of an on-again, off-again relationship with Big (Chris Noth), Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) finally heard the words she had been longing to hear: "You're the one."

Charlotte (Kristin Davis) and Harry (Evan Handler) were happily married and ready to adopt a Chinese baby girl; Miranda (Cynthia Nixon) and Steve (David Eigenberg) moved to Brooklyn and brought Steve's mother to live with them and baby Brady; and Samantha (Kim Catrall) decided it was OK to hold hands with her boyfriend Smith (Jason Lewis) after all.

Next on the chopping block was "Friends," which ended Thursday, May 6. In the finale, Ross (David Schwimmer) and Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) vowed to stay together forever—no more breaks from each other; Monica (Courtney Cox) and Chandler (Matthew Perry) were thrilled and shocked to discover that the mother of the baby they were adopting had twins; Phoebe (Lisa Kudrow) and Mike (guest star Paul Rudd) decided to have children and, of course, Joey (Matt LeBlanc) moved to Hollywood to pursue his acting career.

On May 13, it was the turn of the award-winning "Frasier" to bid adieu after 11 seasons, although the ending was actually a new beginning for the characters. Frasier (Kelsey Grammer) followed his heart and chased Charlotte (Laura Linney) to Chicago; Martin (John Mahoney) married Ronee (Wendie Malick) and Niles (David Hyde Pierce) and Daphne (Jane Leeves) welcomed their first child.

Three in

Even as the three series ended, three more came along to keep TV audiences tuned in.

Over at Fox, "The O.C.," which technically launched in the fall of 2003, became a phenomenon and made stars out of Benjamin McKenzie, Mischa Barton, Adam Brody, and Rachel Bilson, the angst-ridden teen stars of the series.

The gap left by the vixens of "Sex and the City" was filled by ABC's "Desperate Housewives" Teri Hatcher, Felicity Huffman, Marcia Cross, Eva Longoria, and Nicolette Sherican.

And "Alias" creator J.J. Abrams struck gold again when he stranded a plane-full of people on a deserted island somewhere in the South Pacific in "Lost."

Janet's bit

It was also the year in which Janet Jackson introduced the expression "wardrobe malfunction" into the English language when she exposed her breast during half-time at last February's Super Bowl. No laughing matter, the Federal Communications Commission is attempting to fine CBS $550,000 as a result of the incident, which the network is fighting.

And then there was the highly rated "Survivor: All Stars," during which favorites from previous shows competed for the chance to win $1 million. The all-star series went where no other "Survivor" had gone before, spawning a real-life romance between "Boston" Rob Mariano and winner Amber Brkich, which ended in a live, on-air marriage proposal for the show's finale.

ET Online

JENNIFER ANISTON was a friend until the end.

COURTESY DAVE HOGAN

"THE O.C." brought cool to the night time soap opera.

COURTESY ART STREIBER/FOX

COURTESY JEFF USCO

"BOSTON'S" ROB Mariano and Amber Brkich.

"DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES" is the hottest new drama of Fall 2004.

COURTESY DANNY FELD/ABC

Dennis no longer menaced by bad judgment or poor luck

LOS ANGELES—It says a lot about actor Dennis Quaid that he is currently starring in two movies that are poles apart—a big action adventure set in the desert and a light-hearted domestic drama in which he plays a salesman shunted aside by the latest bright young lad.

And it will come as little surprise to observers of the checkered career of the man with the rugged good looks and disarming grin that one ("Flight of the Phoenix") is a box-office dud and the other ("In Good Company") is being feted for its heart-warming charm.

Movie critics have long been puzzled by Quaid, the rumpled Texan who has so often been on the verge of leading-man status via movies like "The Big Easy," only to have it quashed by bad judgment or poor luck in efforts such as the 2004 dud Western "The Alamo."

It used to rile Quaid, too. But turning 50 and buoyed by critically acclaimed performances in 2002 as a closet homosexual in "Far From Heaven" and as a teacher turned baseball star in the family hit "The Rookie" makes him generous enough to shrug it all off.

"I don't feel that way anymore. I feel like I made it big," he laughed. "These past four years have been a big turnaround in my career. It makes all the difference in the world when you have a hit movie and critical success back to back."

Obvious metaphor

"In Good Company," which opens in some US cities this week, sees Quaid playing 51-year-old salesman Dan Foreman who is demoted in a corporate takeover by whiz kid Carter Duryea (played by up-and-coming actor Topher Grace).

With all the arrogance of youth and none of its charm, Duryea shunts Foreman out of his office, beds his beloved daughter and belittles both his experience and his emotions.

If the metaphor seems an obvious one, 6-foot-2 Quaid takes it in his loping stride.

"There was a time in my 30s when I was the new thing and things were easier. In my 40s, I felt like I was being laid off. I had to really scramble and get out there and dig to get parts and hang in there," Quaid told Reuters in an interview.

"The second time around is a lot sweeter. In my 30s I didn't really appreciate my success. Maybe I felt I didn't deserve it. I had mixed feelings about it. I think it's called growing up. You get rid of a lot of useless baggage."

KILLER SMILE. Quaid has a critical success and a hit movie.

Quaid had to "age up" to play Foreman and have his hair greyed by make-up artists. Director Paul Weitz was pleasantly surprised when he agreed to take the part although that's not how Quaid saw it.

"I don't see how that's a risky thing to play your own age, or take a great part with a great director and a great script.

"The idea of some sort of competition going on between the new hot guy and the old wizened veteran might make a good story but that's not the way it was on the set," he said.

Right stuff

Quaid started work on "In Good Company" immediately after flying back from Africa and the set of "Flight of the Phoenix."

The movie is a remake of the 1965 action adventure of the same name starring Jimmy Stewart about a group of men stranded in the desert after their cargo plane crashes. It opened in a miserable 8th place at the US box office in mid-December after minimal promotion and a critical reaction best summed up as, "Why bother?"

"There is nothing deliberate, but I certainly do like diversity in my roles. It keeps it interesting for me. But I don't have any grand strategy about choosing roles. It is based on scripts arriving at my door," Quaid said. "My strategy when I first started out was, I just wanted to be a working actor. It seemed like an impossibly daunting task."

The pressure of stardom after hitting the big time with the astronaut drama "The Right Stuff" in 1983, and playing a sexy but corrupt detective in "The Big Easy" (1987), became equally daunting. Quaid fell into a cycle of drug and alcohol abuse.

He cleaned up his act, married actress Meg Ryan in 1991 and took a two-year break from movies.

After a painful divorce in 2001, Quaid married Texas real estate agent Kimberly Buffington in the summer of 2004, and is now preparing to take on what he sees as his riskiest venture to date—writing, directing and acting all at once.

"Shame on You" is the little-known story of 1940s Western swing star Spade Cooley, who murdered his wife, served jail time and died of a heart attack after a comeback concert.

It will mark Quaid's debut as a feature director. He also wrote the script and will play Cooley.

"It's got celebrity, it's dark—my tastes are turning toward dark. It is a fascinating story," he said. "I have a vision of how I want it to be. It's the full ego thing. Writing and directing and acting in a film is a truly risky proposition. It's putting yourself out there on the line."

Reuters